

First 2005 issue
in 3 weeks:
Sat., Jan. 8

The Main Street **WIRE**™

25th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Pataki Appoints Two Residents As Members of RIOC Board For First Time, Residents Hold a Majority of Seats

by Dick Lutz

The State Senate confirmed two Islanders to the RIOC Board of Directors last week. For the first time, residents hold a majority of the Board seats. The appointments by Governor George Pataki fulfill the requirements of the 2002 law that provided for majority control of the Board by residents he appoints.

The two residents are Alberteen Anderson, 57, who lives in Westview, and Michael Shinozaki, 39, whose apartment is at 40 River Road. Shinozaki's name was put forward by Mayor Michael Bloomberg with sponsorship from outgoing State Senator Olga Mendez; Anderson was invited to become a candidate for a Board seat by RIOC

President Herbert E. Berman.
Anderson

Alberteen Anderson works for the MTA, negotiating contracts with film companies for New York City Transit. The position is in the Division of Government Relations, and she's held it since 1992. Her job involves being on the scene during film shoots, often doing on-
See **RIOC**, page 14

TPL on Financing Southpoint Park: The State Will Have to Take the Lead

Turning Southpoint into a planned \$35 million park will take leadership – read “funding” – from New York State, according to the Trust for Public Lands (TPL).

In a presentation last week of TPL's final preliminary design for the park, the organization's New York City director told residents that, while TPL is not a planning agency, “We agreed to do a master plan because we wanted to work with government to get a park built at one of the City's most spectacular sites. We still want to do this,” Andy Stone said. “If we continue in this process, the next step is a full-fledged schematic design and phase-one construction documents. We can't take this step without additional funding, and we're going to be talking with the RIOC Board and with the State. Clearly, there are other parties who might fund this – the City or private parties – but we're clear that the State of New York would need to take the lead on this if we were to go to the next step. That's going to be one of our goals – to talk to the State about a leadership role here.”

TPL's project director for Southpoint, Charles McKinney, estimated that a first-phase project would cost \$10 million. In the meeting, he and landscape architect Mark K. Morrison offered some details of what might be included in a first phase.



At the smallpox hospital, a tattered window symbolizes a desire to keep the Renwick Ruin a ruin, a sentiment uncovered by TPL in its planning for Southpoint Park.

“The sloping lawn for performances was favored for its ability to improve the economy and cultural vitality of Roosevelt Island,” McKinney said. He told the 75 residents attending the session that, of the three plans presented here at earlier meetings, a simple and distinctly non-commercial plan called “Wild Gardens / Green Rooms” was the clear winner.

Another feature that won high marks was “the mount,” a rise that would build upon and replace a pile of rubble about 100 feet inside the current park gate. “It was judged to enhance the park's natural attributes as well as to provide opportunities for solitude and quiet,” Morrison said.

Other items favored by community evaluators were:
See **Southpoint**, page 8; diagrams on page 10-11



Michael Shinozaki



Alberteen Anderson

Briefly...

Will the **escalator at Motorgate** be demolished, as rumors have it? In response to a WIRE question, RIOC President Herb Berman said last week, “There is no final resolution to this issue. It is still a matter to be resolved and it is still being discussed.” He later indicated it was no more than a “suggestion,” and “no decision was made or even considered on the escalators.” He added, “The escalator issue has not gone beyond a suggestion that has yet to be discussed.” No word yet on whether the community will be consulted if the matter does come under consideration.

Will Z-bricks disappear gradually? RIOC has already announced that future street paving will be done with asphalt rather than Z-bricks, but some residents were surprised by replacement of sidewalk Z-bricks with cement in front of the credit union office. Resident RIOC Board member David Kraut says he thinks Z-brick repair is “going to cost a lot of money. It is going to be up to us at RIOC to come up with the money and to spend it wisely. In the meantime, I am afraid we will see more and more of these piecemeal patches and cement infills.” While they might make short-term economic sense, Kraut says, “in the long run they detract from the look of our community, and from its value.”

Islanders

From Russia, With Love, and Here to Stay – An Author Embraces Her New Country

by Anna Doumnova

From the dining table in her one-bedroom apartment at 546 Main Street, Lyusya Zheleznyak can see the power plant in Queens. “This apartment is much smaller than the one we had in the center of Moscow, when we left Russia 15 years



ago, but we are much happier here than we were in Russia,” she says. A petite woman of strong character, it is clear she was able to live through all problems in Russia, but “our family left Russia as we wanted to find a better place to live for my grandson.” To be able to be reunited with their daughter and grandson in America, Lyusya and her husband, Alexander, had to wait for eight years for special permission to leave the USSR. “Now I feel that I was born in America and that my home is here on Roosevelt Island,” Lyusya smiles. She has a warm kind face, which often breaks into a smile. When Lyusya says how she feels about living in the US, she smiles widely, so it is clear that she is really happy to be here.

Alexander, now retired, was an army officer whose career began during the Second World War and who served all over the USSR. Lyusya was a lawyer. Now retired

from the law, she stays active as a writer. Her stories have appeared in Russian and American publications, including *AMI/Narod Moi* (My Nation) and *Slovo/Word*. In 2000 she published a book of autobiographical stories, entitled *During One Lifetime*. It depicts a remarkable life.

For 12 of their 15 years in America, Lyusya and Alexander have lived on Roosevelt Island. “We love the Island very much. It is a great place,” Lyusya says. “It is like a small town in a big city, and Manhattan is just five minutes away by tram. As for the power plant, it makes noise, but the noise is monotone, so we got used to it quickly and it doesn't bother us anymore,” Lyusya says.

When they first came to the U.S. they lived for three years with their daughter's family in New Jersey. Lyusya and Alexander had a close and loving relationship with them,
See **Lyusha**, page 16



These kids got a special audience with Santa last week when he came to Roosevelt Island, with a little help from René Bryan of Public Safety, to light the tree at Blackwell House. Carolers helped out, too.

Best of the Season from all who bring you The Main Street WIRE

The Editorial Page

A Simple Question

There's a question hanging in the air this Christmas season. It has to do with gifts. One gift in particular, given by RIOC to the developers of Southtown.

It may not be the gift you're thinking of – selling off the land for Southtown buildings 1 through 3 for less than a dollar per buildable square foot, a patent giveaway for which the word “scandal” is desperately inadequate. No, it's not that; it's another gift.

The developers are selling condominium apartments there. With each apartment goes a property tax abatement – no taxes for 20 years, then taxes phased in over five years. Over that period, an owner will save from \$100,000 to over \$200,000 in taxes he won't have to pay. That saving shows up as a lower monthly charge.

It makes an apartment more attractive to a buyer. So much more valuable, in fact, that the lower monthly cost makes a buyer willing to pay considerably more for an apartment than they otherwise might. How much is “considerably more?” That's a question of “net present value:” What is the value today of a savings, over two decades, of as much as \$200,000? Answer: It works out to something over \$75,000 per average unit.

The unspoken sales pitch ringing in each potential buyer's brain is: Invest more now in something that will surely appreciate, and save a bundle every month.

The bundle saved, of course, is tax revenue that will never be seen by government.

The premium value is collected, instead, by the developers, on each apartment sold.

In effect, it is a transfer of 25 years of taxes from government coffers to the developers.

Tax abatements are nothing new on Roosevelt Island. To make this Island happen as a residential community, the Mitchell-Lama program gave builders long-term tax relief. But there's a difference. In exchange, those original developers of Roosevelt Island's housing had to run on a non-profit basis for the period of those State-backed mortgages, waiting a quarter century for any possible profit.

That's not the case at Southtown, where the forgiven property tax goes immediately into the pockets of the developers in the form of higher apartment prices – effectively a gift from the RIOC Board that approved the deal to generous contributors to the campaigns of Governor George Pataki.

The question? *In whose political and governmental conscience is it OK to give away a quarter century of property taxes to boost the immediate profits of political contributors?*

DL

At press time, the **Public Safety Blotter** for the first half of December was not yet ready. When it is, it will be posted on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2508/blot2508.html.


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What Condo Sales Tell Us About the Southtown Deal – And the Island's Future

by Robert Chira

The condominium-offering documents provided to potential buyers of Southtown's condominiums provide some, but not all, details of the agreement between RIOC and the developers, The Hudson Companies and The Related Companies. While RIOC has never released all the facts about the arrangements, it's interesting to note the benefits both RIOC and the developers will receive – and to consider the likely impacts on the Island.

Benefits to RIOC

Here's a summary of benefits to RIOC as disclosed in the offering materials:

• **A Share in Resale Profits:** When a unit is resold, RIOC will collect at least \$3,000. But RIOC's take will be larger if a unit has appreciated more than 20%. For the first five years, RIOC's share of any “excess appreciation” will be 10%.

A unit purchased now at \$500,000 can thus appreciate by up to 20% to a future selling price of \$600,000 without RIOC sharing in any of the profit, but thereafter RIOC takes 10% of any appreciation. Thus, if a unit sells for \$700,000, the excess appreciation is \$100,000 with RIOC taking 10% of that or \$10,000.

After five years, RIOC's share drops to 5%, then 3% after ten years. This arrangement applies to all resales – not just the first.



Bob Chira, a long-time Island resident, is an attorney who practices in Manhattan.

RIOC thus stands to gain at least \$3,000 on every resale of each of the 141 units now up for sale, but potentially much more. (There are 230 units in all, but the super will occupy one, and 88 have been sold to Cornell for students and medical staff.)

• **Additional Rent:** RIOC can impose additional charges on the condominium and its unit owners for “Island services” such as the Tram, the “AVAC” garbage collection system, minibus, landscaping, and increases in public safety costs. RIOC may also collect additional rent for certain “impositions” such as tenant rent and occupancy taxes, water and sewer charges, and personal property taxes. However, all these charges will apply only if they are also imposed on all other Island residential buildings.

• **Compliance with General Development Plan (GDP):** Each unit owner will be asked to submit information about his or her family's income to RIOC on a confidential basis. This will help RIOC determine

compliance with the GDP, which contains limits and parameters on the income levels permitted in Southtown (see comments below about the future of Southtown and its prospects for further development). RIOC acknowledges it and any developers of Southtown must comply with those limits and param-

See Chira, page 16

Letters

To the Editor:

Without in any way disparaging Mr. Shinozaki or Ms. Anderson, they are no more Roosevelt Island resident Board members than any of the others. They are members of the Board appointed by Pataki (or the Mayor) who happen to live on the Island. Resident members are those either chosen by a representative resident body (i.e., the Roosevelt Island Residents Association) or at least appointed with RIRA's advice and consent. Certainly history is full of colonial masters appointing a local to carry out their policies.

Resident representatives on RIOC might bring up the fact that that Island infrastructure to support the buildings was financed by taxpayer-backed bonds (I believe Moral Obligation bonds) for the specific purpose of building affordable housing for moderate- and middle-income families. Pricing these groups off the Island and using the resources to only service the very well off is thievery of the worst sort, and those in government helping it are abetting this thievery. But, of course, Mr. Pataki's representatives would be constrained from making this point.

Ronald Meltzer

To Herb Berman:

You recently wrote a letter to Sheila Chazin regarding Motorgate parking garage that was published in the December 4 *WIRE*. You stated, “We closely monitor break-ins and *I can tell you there have been virtually no break-ins for a long period of time.*” I find this fascinating as there were 12 break-ins logged by PSD (Public Safety Dept.) in the last 4 weeks alone. The last time I checked PSD was a RIOC agency solely appointed and administered by RIOC, of which you are the president.

Attached is a list of recent break-ins reported at Motorgate garage from October 28 through November 30 on PSD's blotter. *There were 2 break-ins classified as Grand Larceny, 4 as Petty Larceny* Letters continue on page 8

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

Why?

Why are the streets of Roosevelt Island continually choked with parked cars? The indicated parking regulations permit short term parking in designated areas, by permit obtained through depositing quarters in a dispensing machine, yet at any given moment there will be approximately 100 vehicles parked on the street without paying, many of these permanently. Main Street is so congested that you, RIOC, regularly park vehicles on the sidewalk.

It seems that almost any excuse will be accepted to permit free on-street parking:

- I work for the Pizza Restaurant, or Julie's Back Page, or M & D, or the Fish Store, or RIOC, or Manhattan Park, or Westview (“See doorman”), or Goldwater Hospital.
- I am an Active Supporter of the NY Fraternal Order of Police, or I support the NY Police Conference, or I have an expired ID of the NYS Law Enforcement Officer's Union, or I support the Association of Police Chiefs, or I display any form of indication that I might be police-friendly.
- I am on Official Business (?) for the Corrections Dept., Rikers Island, or EMS Corona Valley Ambulance (blank, undated), or the State Dept. of Mental Health, or the Visiting Nurse Service, or Fire Department.
- We manage Manhattan Park, but it is too much of an imposition to be expected to cross the street to Motorgate; or, who needs to park on the street when we have our own private parking spaces on Westview property.
- Emergency service 513 Main Street, so I can park on River Road.
- I work for the NY Police Dept., 7th Precinct.
- I am a Doctor, but not on call.
- I have handicapped ID, or my grandson is handicapped, or I have an expired handicapped permit for another car, so I can be anti-social and park permanently on Main Street.
- I am a retired police officer.
- I can't be bothered to think up an excuse, but I will just park anyway.

It never used to be this way. The traffic regulations have not changed in the 27 years that I have lived here, only the people who enforce them. We have a parking garage which is half empty.

Why does somebody who apparently works for a DA's office, somewhere, get to park freely on the streets of Roosevelt Island for over four years, while the Boy Scouts use \$850 of their hard-earned money each year to park their Scoutmobile in Motorgate?

Why does anyone get to park on Main Street, other than to load or unload? Why, Mr. Berman, why?

Geoffrey Kerr

Related report, page 8

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 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.

Letters deadline for January 8 issue: **Tuesday, January 4**
After deadline, letters will be considered on a space-available basis.

I want to take this opportunity to wish everybody a very happy holiday season. I wish that there was better weather the night of the tree lighting, but I am glad that the children enjoyed the visit from Santa and the firefighters from Special Operations.

In the last issue I listed some of the things that we were able to accomplish during the past year. In this issue I want to look ahead to some of the things that we hope to accomplish in 2005.

The first thing is the repair of the elevators at the Motorgate facility. The frequent outages are inconvenient and unacceptable. We are working with our partner in the facility, Manhattan Park, on these repairs. As previously reported, we have already sent out an RFP for the work, and I anticipate that it will start this winter. I am disappointed that it has taken this long and I will continue to push for a resolution.

The coming year will also see other work performed on the facility. As many of you have noticed, whenever it rains, water flows into the facility. We have already issued an RFP for general engineering services and that contract was recently awarded. One of the things that this firm will be examining is the entry points for the water and the path that it takes throughout the building. We anticipate that this work will be done by the spring and any remedial steps will start soon after that.

Finally with regard to Motorgate, we will continue to work with the management at the parking garage to ensure that the facility is clean and well maintained. There have been some definite improvements over the past several months. It is my goal to continue to find other ways to make the facility cleaner and more inviting for regular customers and visitors.

RIOC is also still focused on the roads. Work started on the roads within the past several weeks, but that work will not be a permanent fix. We are also having the engineering firm look at the roads throughout the Island. It is my goal that in 2005 we will start a permanent repair of all of the roads, catch basins and crosswalks. Once completed the roads will be more easily navigated by pedestrians, easier

So, we have two new members to the RIOCI Board. I'd like to show some enthusiasm, but, with the exception of Mark Ponton, I haven't seen anyone appointed since Pataki took over in 1995 who has shown the least interest in what the residents think, let alone what we want.

The Board, as it currently operates, is a disgrace. About a third of the meetings are cancelled or postponed. (This is actually fortunate, given the quality of their decisions.) Public input is permitted at only three meetings per year (one of these meetings was cancelled). Most meetings are scheduled in the late morning, which assures that most residents cannot attend. But whether we attend or not, they almost immediately go into private "executive session," so that deliberations on matters that vitally affect our neighborhood are kept secret from us. The quality of public debate reveals an indifference to detail that undermines any public trust.

The RIOCI Board has been a rubber stamp for the giveaways of Southtown, Octagon, and the old Public School ground rents, while completely ignoring the obvious havoc that the onslaught of school buses would cause to Main Street traffic. I think Board-member John Mannix succinctly summed up his and the Board member's view of their roles when he said, "We are essentially a real-estate management company." And a lousy one at that; if they managed their own real-estate affairs as poorly as they do at RIOCI, they would be as broke as the Island is.

So, while the Board plans their next real-estate outrage to the Island in their infrequently scheduled secret meetings, perhaps they might want to throw us a bone and look into the following:

- In the recent referendum, 90% of voting residents requested that you give the Youth Center a lease on space in the former Lilies School, so they can use the \$1.6 million offered by the City. If you don't do this soon, the money will be lost. If you are, suddenly, so concerned about income, then charge the Youth Center the same ground rent that you charge the Child School.
- 73% of voting residents are not happy with Public Safety. RIOCI President Herb Berman believes that this is due primarily to "bad public relations." Regardless of why we aren't happy with Public Safety services, at least give us, in writing, a list of responsibilities. Tell us, in detail, what we should expect from Public Safety. Document how many vertical patrols they intend to make in Eastwood and Motorgate, what their policy is toward handling noisy or violent disturbances, and identify what the priorities are. Then, at least, we will have a yardstick with which to judge this organization for which we are forced to pay over \$2.5 million per year through our rents.
- 71% of voting residents are not happy with Island Main-

to maintain, and more visually appealing.

We are also working with a consultant to revitalize the commercial strip on the Island. We have a lot of exciting possibilities and look forward to a great deal of progress on this in the coming year. It is anticipated that plans will be presented in the early part of the year and implementation will start immediately thereafter.

The coming year will also see much progress on building three of Southtown and we will soon be able to welcome additional neighbors to the Island. The residents of buildings one and two have already added to the community, and I am confident that the same will be true of the residents in Riverwalk.

The next steps will also be taken toward the development



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

of a park at Southpoint. There have been several well-attended community meetings that led to the selection of the preferred plan. The next stage is to try and raise the funds for the first phase of the preferred plan. The Trust for Public Land is already hard at work on this to make the park a reality. It is our hope that at least a portion of the funds and the next stages in the planning will be completed in the coming year.

There will also be general Island beautification projects undertaken in 2005. The plans include, but are not limited to, remedial work on the railings surrounding the Island, the sprucing up of the storefronts, the painting of the tops of the kiosks and the replacement of the planters along Main Street.

I look forward to 2005. I hope that it is a happy and healthy one for you and your families. I also look forward to all that we can accomplish for and with the residents of Roosevelt Island. Happy New Year!

tenance. Even with the tight budget fix that you got yourselves into, you should be able to come close to providing the levels of maintenance we had before Governor George Pataki took office. And again, it doesn't cost anything to communicate. RIRA provides a "triage" list of issues, and RIOCI management should have one as well. Tell us what the priorities are, what is going to be done and when.

- Use residents for advice and assistance. You would be pleased to find a rich resource of residents with the intelligence and dedication to offer you valuable counsel. The RIRA Common Council is also ready and willing to work with you to make this a better place to live.

Thanks to your copying me on e-mails to and from Herb Berman, I've been able to see the widespread impatience with the continuing awful conditions at Motorgate. Several alert readers have noted that the *Public Safety Blotter* available on *The WIRE's* website lists numerous incidents at the garage. I am awaiting information from RIOCI on how the surveillance system works at the garage, but I am willing to bet that with the proper number and placement of cameras, lawbreakers would be clearly identified. I've spoken to a few people who claim to have successfully sued for damages to their cars at the garage. I recently met Philip Groner, a local resident, attorney, and *WIRE* advertiser, who is happy to talk with residents who have grievances due to negligent safety or security conditions at Motorgate or elsewhere on the Island.



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

In a review of RIRA's "gripe list" with Sari Dickson, RIOCI's Chief of Operations, I learned that Con Ed has completed its installation of three new transformers on the Island. These are necessary to insure that Main Street stays lighted. Unfortunately, they patched the sidewalk by the Card Shop and Senior Center with cement. Sari assures me the Z-bricks will be replaced when weather permits. RIRA has repeatedly reported the broken lights in front of Westview and Rivercross – perhaps now they can be repaired. Details on other maintenance issues and news on our lawsuit to stop the destruction of Octagon Park will be reported in future columns. In the meantime, please continue to keep me in the loop on your problems and progress by dropping me a line – SteveAtRIRA@verizon.net.

Finally, on behalf of your RIRA Common Council, we wish all of our friends, neighbors and other interested readers a joyous holiday season, and a great New Year.

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Windows, exhibit at Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street; open Wednesdays & Fridays, 6-9 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays, 11-5.

– The Coming Week –

Deadline for the Gift Drive, Mon., Dec. 20, end of day. Wrapped gifts for adult Coler-Goldwater Hospital patients can be left in the boxes at Public Safety and in the lobbies at Manhattan Park, Westview, Island House, Rivercross, or Eastwood. Indicate whether gift is intended for male or female. For additional information call Carol da Silva, **212 838-4747**.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., Dec. 23**, 6:30 p.m., *Hunger*, by Chang. Copies of book available at the branch.

– Future Events –

La Leche League meeting for breastfeeding and pregnant women, **Mon., Jan. 3**, 1:00 p.m., 20 River Road #5P. Information: **212-832-1188**.

The Main Street WIRE – First issue of 2005 in three weeks: **Sat., Jan. 8**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an "Add Me" message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Friday, Dec. 31; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Jan. 2; inserts due Thur., Jan. 6. **Future issues:** Jan. 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.

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.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Jan. 10, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., Jan. 20**, 6:30 p.m., *Don't Erase Me*, by Ferrall. Copies of book available at the branch.

La Leche League meeting for breastfeeding and pregnant women, **Mon., Feb. 7**, 1:00 p.m., 20 River Road #5P. Information: **212-832-1188**.

Bernard Dove Presents a Valentine's Dance, Sat., Feb. 12, 8:00 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater Club. \$25.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Feb. 14, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., Feb. 17**, 6:30 p.m., *Who's Irish*, by Jen. Copies of book available at the branch.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Feb. 28, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

La Leche League meeting for breastfeeding and pregnant women, **Mon., Mar. 7**, 1:00 p.m., 20 River Road #5P. Information: **212-832-1188**.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Mar. 14, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., Mar. 17**, 6:30 p.m., *At Home With the Glynns*, by Kraft. Copies of book available at the branch.

Senior Center

Monday	Thursday
10-11, Latchhook Class	10:00, Tai Chi
10-11:30, English as 2nd Language	10:30, Creative Arts
10:30, Blood Pressure Screening	12:30, Movie
12:30, "Oldies" Movies	1:00, Drawing with Pastels
1:00, Tai Chi	7:00, Dance
7:00, Dance Class (Beginners)	Friday
Tuesday	9:30, Yoga
10:00, Computers	10:30, Computers
10:00, Chinese massage	1:00, Bridge
1:00, Bingo	7:00, Games (RISA)
6:00, Yoga Class	Saturday
7:30, Games (RISA)	7:30, Bingo (RISA)
Wednesday	
9:15, Stay Well	
10:00, Spanish Class	
10:30, Shoppers' Bus	
12:30, Sculpting	
7:00, Pokeno (RISA)	

Special Events

Sat., Dec. 18, 6:00, Holiday Party
Thur., Dec. 23, after lunch, Holiday celebration
Fri., Dec. 31, 8:00, New Year's Eve Party

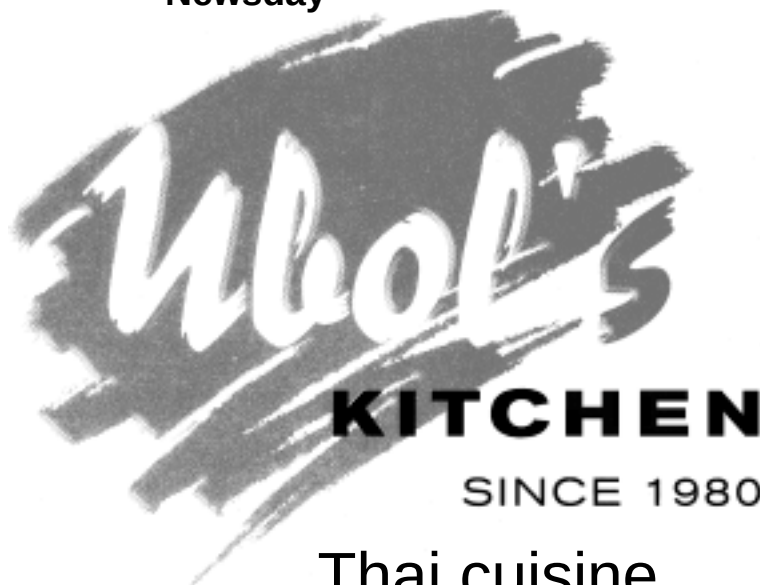
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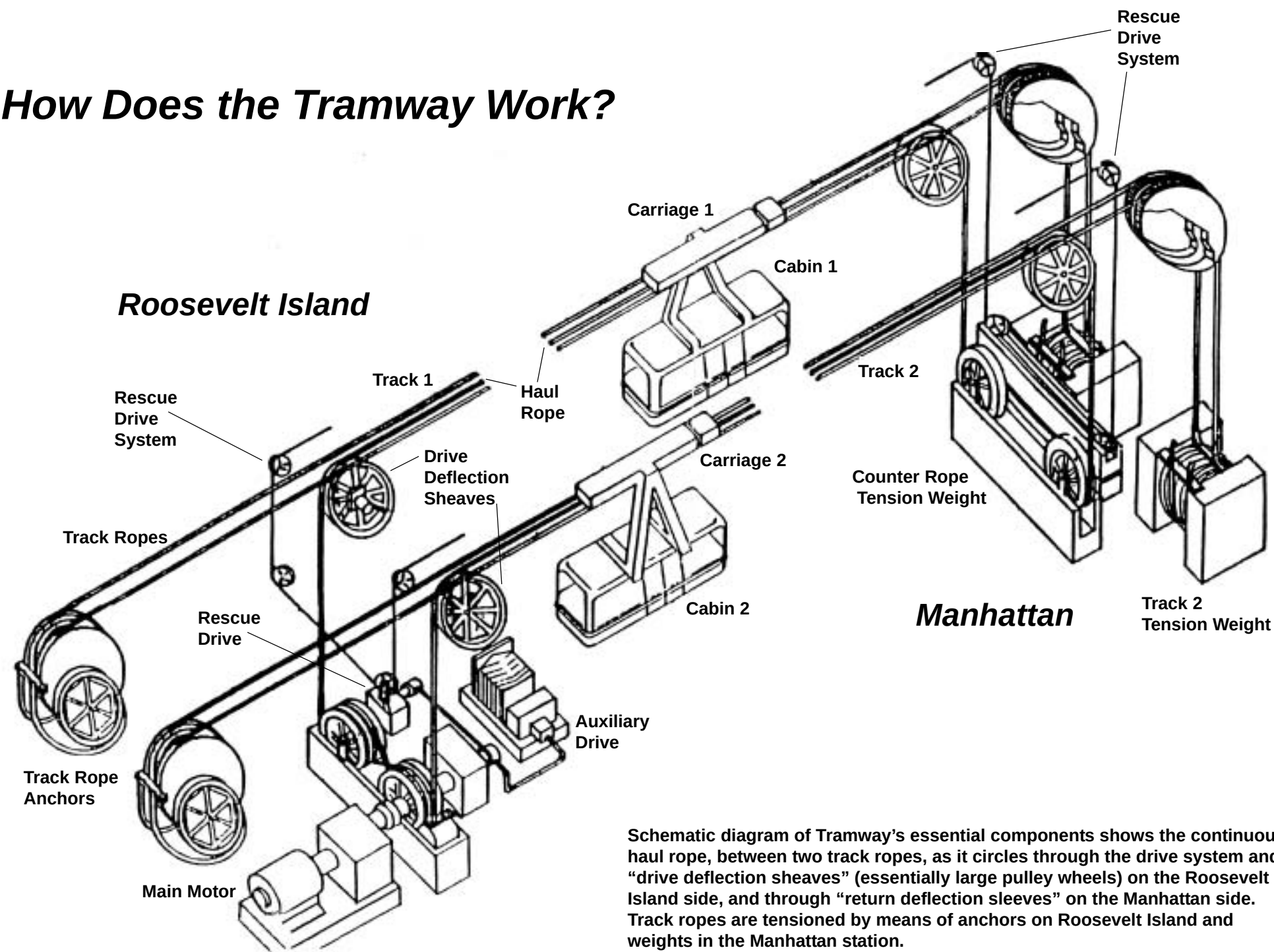
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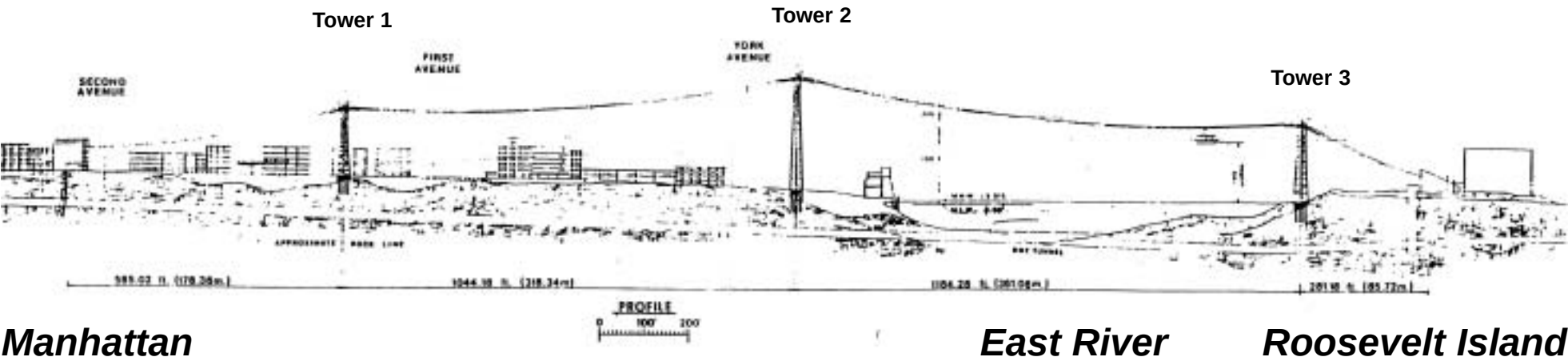
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How Does the Tramway Work?



Schematic diagram of Tramway’s essential components shows the continuous haul rope, between two track ropes, as it circles through the drive system and “drive deflection sheaves” (essentially large pulley wheels) on the Roosevelt Island side, and through “return deflection sleeves” on the Manhattan side. Track ropes are tensioned by means of anchors on Roosevelt Island and weights in the Manhattan station.

Diagram below, with Roosevelt Island on the right, shows distances between towers and their relationship to Manhattan avenues. The profile of the subway tunnel (labeled BMT tunnel) can be seen as it passes under water in the East River and under Manhattan.



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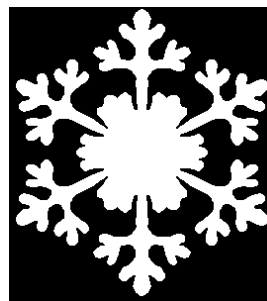
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Age 8

Letters

from page 2

and 6 classified as Criminal Mis- chief. This was obtained from *The WIRE*’s Public Safety Blotter (<http://nyc10044.com/wire/2507/lot2507.html>) supplied by PSD. Given you don’t park in Motorgate, you might want to check your sources next time you make assertions contradicting the patrons of Motorgate or any other Island/RIOC services, which you obviously do not personally use.

Damon LaScot
Westview Task Force
Security Director

To My Neighbors:

Citizens have worked toward the resident control of the government of Roosevelt Island that was promised in the early 1980s when the first initial Island development was being completed. The effort toward self government kicked into high gear at the July 4, 1997, demonstration at the bell in Good Shepherd Plaza. It was a grass roots response to the clumsy efforts of the new Island administrator appointed right after George Pataki became Governor.

Following the demonstration, 40 residents gathered under the maple tree at Blackwell House to start an examination of the operation of the Island. It quickly became evident that the structure was broken; if changes were not to occur, the quality of the Island community would move from being a model to being a disgrace.

The changes, which would require State legislation, were twice approved by the Common Council of the Residents Association (RIRA) and twice approved, resoundingly, in Election-Day referenda.

The proposals were put into the hopper by Assemblymember Pete Grannis for three legislative sessions in a row and then lost, each time in the last Legislative week, over small points. Finally, Senator Olga Mendez arranged a meeting between Governor Pataki and representatives of the Maple Tree Group (MTG). At that meeting, the Governor appeared to agree with Senator Mendez that Island residents, elected by residents to the RIOC Board, should control the operation and destiny of the Island.

The legislation finally coming out of the Governor’s Office was a partial step. It gave residents a simple majority on the Board, with those residents screened by and appointed by the Governor. Worse than the partial step is that fact that it has actually taken the Governor nearly three years to make the last majority appointment from the pool of Island residents.

There is a general consensus among people with whom I have talked that the success of further moves toward self-government for the Island will require a change in attitude in the Governor’s Office. In preparation for that time, residents of the Island must continue to make clear to Assemblymember Grannis and newly-elected Senator José Serrano their unhappiness with the present RIOC performance.

If you have other thoughts on how the move toward self government should proceed, please pass them along to me (djbauer@rcn.com or 531 Main Street #728). Beyond that, your active involvement in the Government Relations Committee of RIRA, which is open to residents, would an excellent idea.

David Bauer
Convener, Maple Tree Group

To the Editor:

I cannot keep quiet for one more minute.

The last few weekends, I’ve seen the clearing of trees, tennis courts, and rocks for the new Octagon Development. For most of us, this is a painful and horrible event. The Governor, the Developers, RIOC, and the RIOC Board are breaking the law.

The law is clear that this area is supposed to be open space for a Park and not a housing development. How easily laws are allowed to be broken on our Island. When the Governor wants additional development, he either changes the law to suit the developers or just ignores it at our expense. RIOC will receive \$11 million, while the developers will get over \$15 million a year for Octagon. The same bad deal holds true at Southtown. The developers will receive between \$175-200 million for the third building while the Island gets a little over \$2 million.

The funds the Island will be receiving are one-shot deals. What will happen five years from now? What kind of philosophy is this? If RIOC had made a better deal at Southtown, there wouldn’t have been a need for another development to produce revenue, and our Island wouldn’t be falling apart. Instead, the developers make a lot of money, and their developments will be maintained. They will have lights, beautiful landscaping, streets will be clean and well maintained, and the rest of Roosevelt Island is allowed to decay.

How far does \$11 million really spread these days? The Island will continue to fall apart because the people running it don’t care enough about it, and don’t really know how to maintain it properly. There is absolutely no creativity. Not one of the resident RIOC Board members, except Mark Ponton, has ever voted against any development issues. These representatives have sold out their community. The Governor knows that, and that’s why they remain on the Board.

At a recent Board meeting, the community was threatened not to proceed with a lawsuit. We were told that residents would be hurting themselves because of the expense to RIOC. What’s the difference? The Island doesn’t get repaired anyway. I walk around the Island every weekend and see the constant deterioration. The Island is dirty, bricks are broken, there are cracks and holes in the concrete we walk on, there is pigeon crap everywhere, escalators and elevators don’t work, we don’t have proper lighting, the merchants don’t make enough money to offer better products, windows don’t get washed, and garbage doesn’t get picked up enough. But we will have big expensive development all around us while the older part of the Island will just continue to fall apart.

Bad deals have been made because the Governor gives favors to his friends and we suffer for it. If you are as angry as I am, please let RIOC and our political representatives hear from you.

Vicki Feinmel

Immune from Tickets: Public Safety List Exempts Over 230 From Parking Citations

Over 230 drivers are authorized to park free, without danger of a summons, on Roosevelt Island’s streets, according to a list provided to *The WIRE* by RIOC in response to a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request.

That’s more free parkers than there are parking places.

The WIRE’s FOIL request asked for the then-current “Do Not Summons” list then in force at the Public Safety Department (PSD). In response, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation provided a list with 236 entries. On the other hand, while the August, 2004, FOIL request called for the list “as it exists as of this date,” some entries on the list go back to 2001 – yet no list was provided for 2003.

In addition, at least ten cars parked with immunity from summons on June 30, 2003, and still parked on August 17, 2004, are not on the 13-page list provided by RIOC, according to Island House resident Geof Kerr, who has made something of a pastime of counting cars parked without summonses. “The information provided by RIOC looks suspiciously like an effort to overwhelm you with useless information,” Kerr said last week. “At the same time, they clearly have not provided

complete information on the current list of parkers immune from summons.”

On-street parking has been an issue for some time on Roosevelt Island. Residents returning from shopping trips are forced to double park – itself the subject of forbidding signs – in order to unload groceries or handicapped or elderly passengers.

The lists provided by RIOC suggest that a broad range of personnel at RIOC and PSD have the authority to put a car on the immune list. Authorizing names include Suarez, Dir. [Jim] Fry, Banberger, Ortega, RIOC, Yee, Bryan, Aida (an administrative aide in the PSD office), Williams, Rios, Santiago, Azular, Cohn, Wright, Coleman, “Per Lt.,” a variety of initials (some indecipherable), and even “Unk” (presumably for “unknown”).

In a “Purpose” column, words like “work” and “merch” appear frequently, along with “mech” and “chapel,” “handicap” and “medical.” Also listed are “official,” “MTA,” “RIHM,” and “handicapped grandson.”

Individuals whose cars have handicap plates (a wheelchair symbol) may legally park, without paying the parking fee and without receiving a summons, wherever

parking is legal. But on Roosevelt Island, many street parkers who hang a “handicapped” tag from their mirrors and their cars remain unticketed. Such tags are intended only for use in parking lot spaces designated as being for handicapped users only, but not for on-street parking.

RIOC’s response to the *WIRE* FOIL request was several weeks overdue when it was supplied, even though the request was a simple one – for a copy of the list then currently in force at PSD.

Kerr, who is scoutmaster to both the Island’s Cub Scouts and its older Boy Scouts, pays the \$71 a month employee rate to park the Scouts’ van in Motorgate. He wondered aloud why RIOC doesn’t relegate those parkers who have some legitimate reason to park free to a designated section of Motorgate. He has an open letter to RIOC President Herbert E. Berman in this issue of *The WIRE* (page 2).

Some drivers would appear to have reasonable cause for some special consideration. “Death in family” is one such listing.

The complete listing provided by RIOC is posted, with this issue of *The WIRE*, on Website NYC10044, at nyc10044.com/wire/2508/wire2508.com.

Southpoint from page 1

- A stabilized Renwick Ruin, with a café.
- A perimeter circulation system that would bring visitors near “touchable” water.
- Waterfront overlooks.
- A gatehouse/visitor center.
- A wintertime landscape, with ice skating.
- A boat dock, primarily for kayaks.

In ice-skating weather, an outdoor rink would cover an area immediately north of the smallpox hospital (known as the Renwick Ruin because it was designed by James Renwick, who also designed the Island’s lighthouse and, not incidentally, St. Patrick’s Cathedral). In warm months, Renwick Plaza, as it is called in planning, would provide a performance area at the foot of a sloping amphitheater. The present land forms lend themselves to this adaptation.

McKinney said that a Louis Kahn-designed memorial to President Franklin D. Roosevelt which would cover the southern half of the site received the third-largest number of “don’t want this” votes from those commenting on the three designs, one of which incorporated Kahn’s design. But the winner of the “don’t want this” competition was a “village crescent” incorporated into the “Parc Ville” plan. It would have involved three floors of “speculative rental space.”

McKinney said that one thing many evaluators had in common, with regard to Southpoint, is a “high regard for the site.” “There are people who love the wild nature of this place, and they don’t want the ruins ‘neatened up.’”

But funding is the critical issue. McKinney told residents, “The project will not move unless there’s quite a bit of popular support for it. It only gets harder from this point on.” Later, ending the meeting, Stone told residents, “We hope to continue, but we’re very well aware that there are some major challenges ahead. We hope to enlist some of you as supporters in our next steps.”

Whether enterprises in the park could provide the funding necessary for a \$250,000 to \$400,000 annual operating budget is another critical issue. “There seems to be quite a bit of support for the idea that the ruins could be the centerpiece of a park, and that the ruins could be an appropriate location for park-related revenue generation,”

Stone said. “The idea of a restaurant and a café comes up a lot, but there are tremendous questions about feasibility – [for example,] access to the site: Can you get people here from off the Island? Can this really generate revenue?”

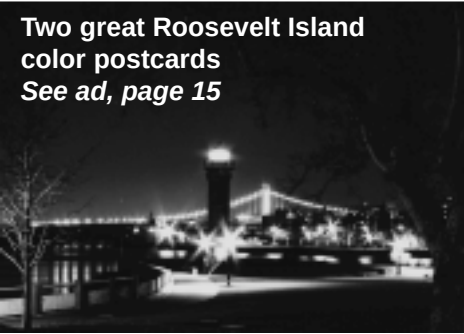
Stone said project participants had visited the site with some experts and restaurateurs. “This is one of the most spectacular sites in the City, and just one intriguing idea is that this is a very special place for weddings, banquets, and events. Those might be appealing to restaurateurs as the lead uses. We’ve heard a lot of ideas; we’d like to look into them more.”

But TPL’s assessment is that more ideas will come along once actual creation of the park is under way. Stone: “If we feel that money can be raised for phase one, to stabilize the ruin, we could start to do things like issue requests for proposals, so you could see the full range of what’s out there. Our initial sense is that nobody’s going to invest in a facility at the site unless the ruins are stabilized first. Our sense is that if the ruins were stabilized first, then you could develop an appropriate revenue generator inside, and you could issue an RFP for that.”

McKinney added, “Government would first need to pay to stabilize the ruin, and then the restaurateur, or a conference center person, or some non-profit – whoever took responsibility for building inside the ruin – would then have to pay the entire cost of [creating a facility]. We explored a little bit how much a restaurant can generate. You want something there to serve as a park amenity, but you also want something there that’s going to generate sufficient revenue to operate the park – something on the order of \$250,000 to \$400,000 a year.” He outlined ways in which performance events might generate revenue from ticket sales, but also from ancillary services like transportation and event sponsorship. He described the site as being eminently “television worthy.”

A ferry landing is in the plan, but both Morrison and McKinney made the point that there’s a kind of chicken-and-egg problem – a ferry can help bring people to events, but the events must be there to make ferry service financially viable.

In a \$10 million phase one, Morrison told the gathering that several visible components, in addition to necessary infrastructure, could be completed: the comfort station, main pedestrian access on the Manhattan-side shore, stabilization of the Renwick Ruin, a couple of overlooks, regrading of the sloping lawn in the large performance area, and initial creation of the Renwick Plaza north of the ruin. He said temporary structures might be provided for kayak storage, deferring a boathouse and workshop until later. “There’ll be a noticeable difference and a great platform to build on from there,” he said. “It will provide everybody with a great deal more than you have now.”





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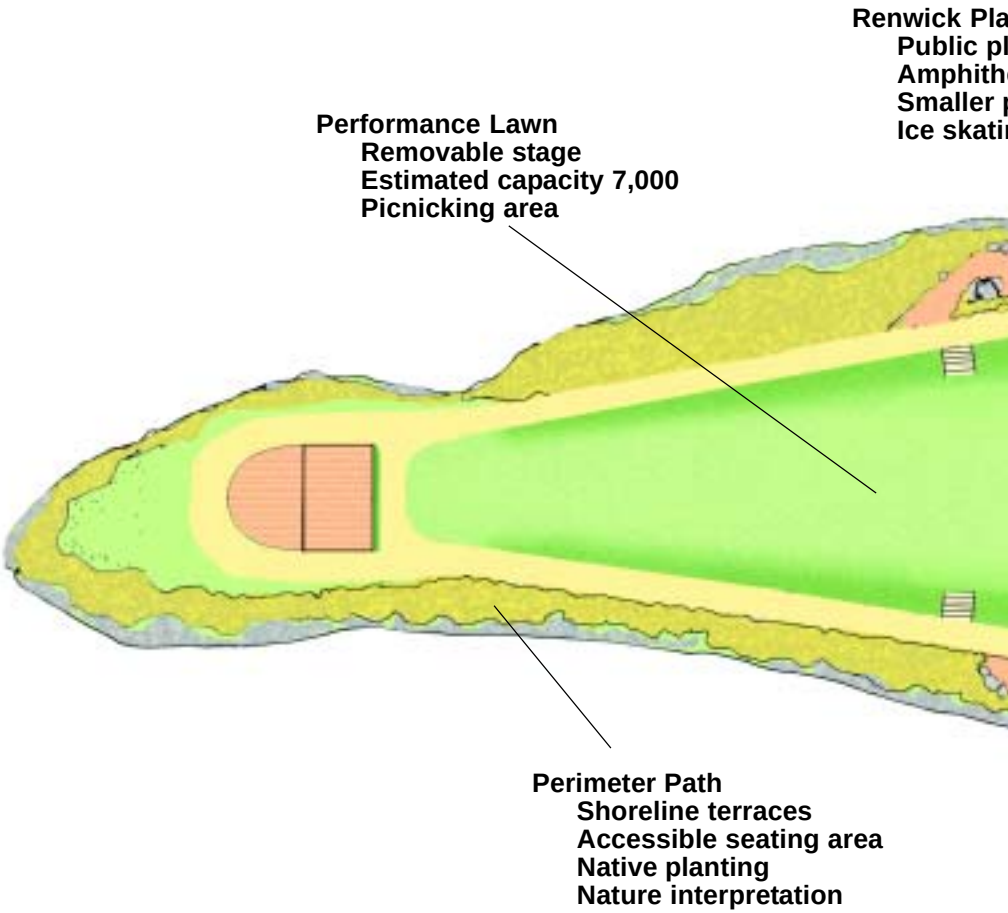


***Congresswoman
Carolyn Maloney***

TPL’s Final Conceptual Plan for Southpoint Park – Mostly a “Wild”



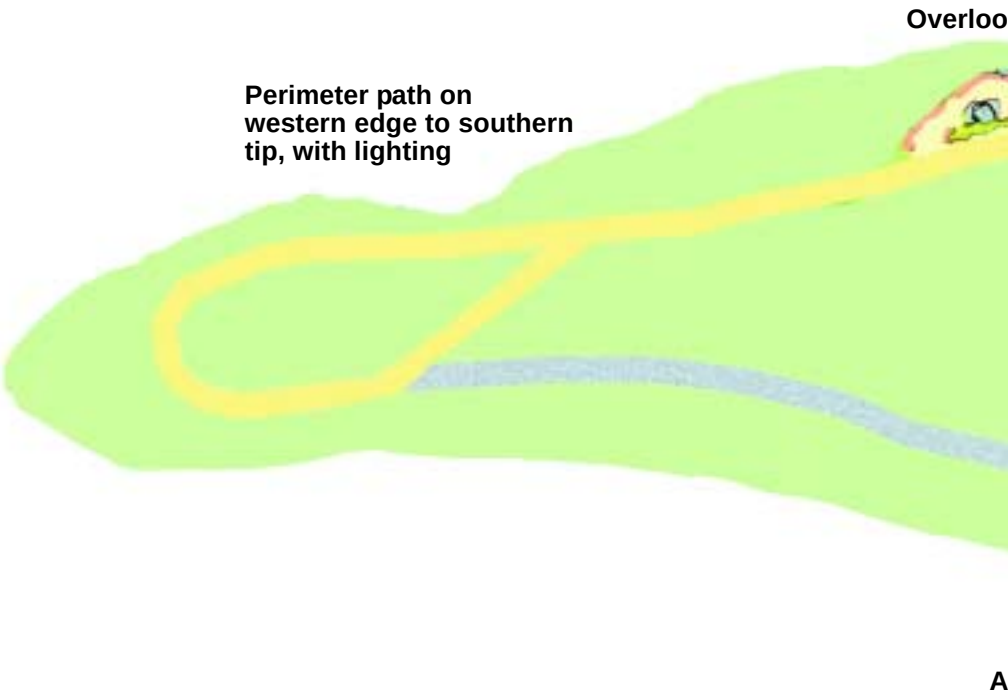
Ultimately, a restaurant might be built within the Renwick Ruin, with catering for weddings and meetings a source of financial support for the park.



As superimposed here over a view of the western edge of Southpoint, overlooks would be handicapped-accessible with flat paths negotiable in wheelchairs and electric-powered scooters.

***...With a \$10 Million Phase One Start
– If the Money Can Be Found***

(See story, page 1)



"Old Gardens / Green Rooms" \$35 Million Design...

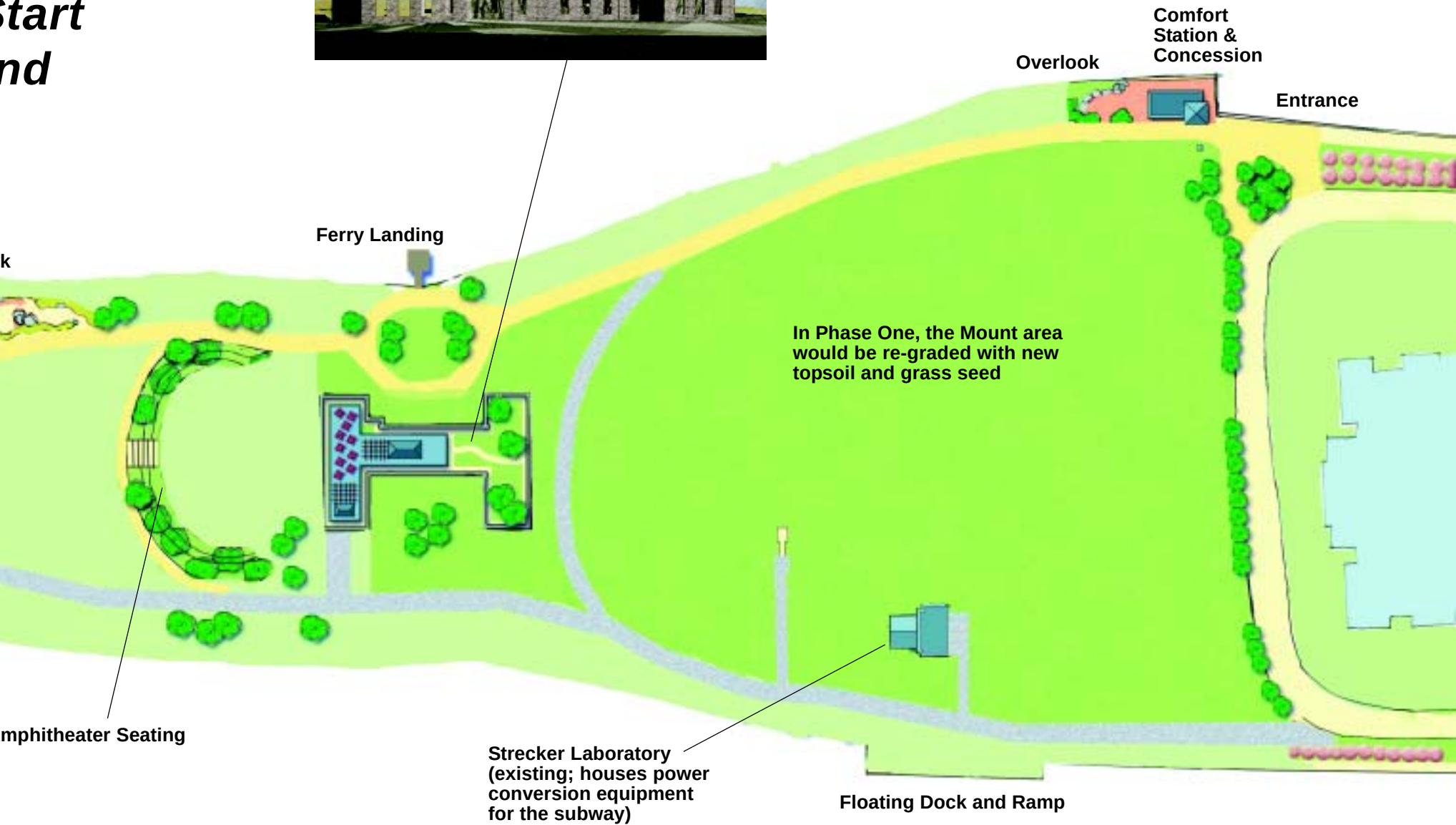


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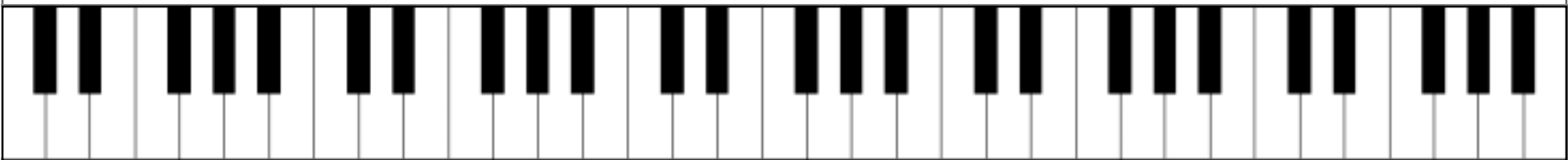
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Chira from page 2

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• **Lump Sum Pre-Payment of Ground Rent:** Instead of collecting ground rent of about \$12 million at a rate of \$200,000 per year for the six decades of the lease term subject to annual increases for inflation, the developers will make one lump-sum payment for ground rent, discounted to its present value. The amount is not disclosed in the offering plan, but it could amount to more than \$10 million.

Developers’ Benefits

The offering plan discloses these benefits to the developers:

• **20-Year Real-Estate Tax Exemption:** The developers and condo unit owners get an exemption from New York City real-estate taxes for the first 20 years of the lease term. After that, the taxes or their equivalents (called “payments in lieu of taxes,” or PILOTs) will be phased in 20% per year for five years. Full real-estate taxes will not begin until 2030. This represents a substantial saving in the monthly common charges for unit owners for the next 25 years.

• **No Future Ground Rent Payments:** Beyond the lump sum payment described above, the developers pay nothing for ground

rent for the 62-year balance of the lease term.

• **Infrastructure Costs Partly Paid for by RIOC:** RIOC has already paid an estimated \$4.5 million of the cost of extending infrastructure to Southtown – roads, sewers, natural gas, electricity, and the AVAC garbage-collection system.

• **Future Development Credits:** If the developers rent up to 25% of the units to low-income tenants, they will earn “development credits.” Those credits can be applied to other new buildings the developers may construct on the Island or within a half-mile radius. This will allow the developers to build a higher and bulkier building as a result of a higher “floor/area ratio.”

• **Mixed Population of Owners, Tenants, and Others:** The developers have the option to have a “mixed” population of owners, tenants, and temporary occupants, not just condo owners. Floors 6-9 will contain mostly studio apartments for the medical staff and students of Cornell University, which is buying 88 units. Other units may be sold to companies for temporary housing for visiting personnel. Even “timeshares” may be sold. In addition, unit owners can sublet. Thus, the building will not be 100% occupied by owners, but could have a substantial number of transient residents.

Impact on Roosevelt Island

How will the new condominium building affect the rest of the Island and its residents?

• The Island’s population will increase by 500-600, including about 200 students. This will result in more rush-hour congestion at the Tram and subway.

• In negotiating ground-lease extensions for Island House, Westview, and Rivercross, RIOC will no doubt seek to levy the same “impositions” and added charges for “Island services,” and might require a share in the

Condo Prices Up 52% to 81% at Riverwalk

Base prices for Riverwalk condos have been increased for the seventh time. The base price of a studio apartment has risen from \$220,000 at the time of the initial offering to \$385,000 in the latest repricing, an increase of 75%. At the other end of the scale, base pricing of three-bedroom units has gone from \$675,000 then to \$1,225,000 (81%) now.

Some of the increase in base price can be accounted for by earlier sale of lower-value units, with premium units released for sale later. The website with information on the apartments is at www.RiverwalkNYC.com.

	Initial base price	Current base	Increase
Studio	\$ 220,000	\$ 385,000	75%
1 bedroom	290,000	505,000	74%
1 bedroom/den	365,000	560,000	53%
2 bedroom	480,000	740,000	54%
2 bedroom/den	575,000	875,000	52%
3 bedroom	675,000	1,225,000	81%

resale profits of any private coop apartments in those buildings. Although their leases run another 22 years, this is a near-term consideration because all three buildings need ground-lease extensions if they are to become private coops.

• It should be noted that, while Related and Hudson are the designated developers of Southtown, they are under no obligation to continue to build the rest of the plan that was approved by RIOC in 1999. That plan calls for nine buildings and 2,000 housing units. Hudson and Related have already built and sold 465 and 475 Main Street, one to Memorial/Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and the other to Cornell Medical College, at prices that have not been disclosed. They could decide not to proceed with building any more of Southtown beyond the current condominium building.

• One possible restraint on the developers may be that the GDP requires that at least 40% of Southtown’s housing units (or about 800 units) be for low-, moderate-, and middle-income tenants with a maximum of 60% allocated for market-rate units. Addi-

tional benefits may have to be given to the developers to induce them to complete the nine buildings and 2,000 housing units originally envisioned for Southtown. Alternatively, the GDP might have to be amended to change the 60/40 ratio to allow more market-rate units to be rented or sold.

Base prices for the condominiums have been increased approximately seven times since sales started; they are now significantly above the original offering. This may signify greater demand than had been expected, a marketing strategy to create excitement, or hopeful thinking by the developers. As of two weeks ago, sales personnel were saying that over half the available units had been sold, suggesting the developers have met the 20% sale requirement for declaring the condo offering effective. Even so, the developers have reserved the right to withdraw the condominium plan and make the building all-rental. As for completion of the construction, the building should be ready for occupancy in early 2006.

Incidentally, the developers have given Southtown a new name, “Riverwalk.”

Lyusha from page 1

but they wanted a place of their own. Besides, “after living in a city like Moscow, we felt life was too provincial in a small town in New Jersey and we hoped to move to New York City.” Being on a limited budget they looked at several apartments in the City that they could afford but did not like them. “Then we found out it was possible to apply for a subsidized apartment on Roosevelt Island. We came to look at the Island and fell in love with it.” They were delighted when they got the apartment. “We wouldn’t consider living anywhere else.”

“We like everything about the U.S. and the reality of America has exceeded our expectations,” Lyusya says. Once, when they still lived in New Jersey, she went for a walk and got lost. “I did not speak English well, so I didn’t know how I would be able to find my daughter’s home,” she recalls. On the street she met two people – a young woman and her father – and they were very nice to her. She managed to explain to them that she was lost, but she could not even spell the name of her son-in-law. They brought her to their home, managed to find the son-in-law’s name in the phone book, and called him. Then they insisted on bringing her home. “I was thrilled that total strangers were so nice to me.”

“As for the country as a whole,” Lyusya says, “we found in America what we had always longed for but did not have in Russia – democracy, freedom, stability. In the USSR we felt separated from the system. We could not stand lies.” Lyusya and Alexander lived through the regimes of Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, and Gorbachev. “Only Gorbachev,” according to Lyusya, “brought some hopes for a better life.” They left Russia before the USSR broke apart in 1991.

“Growing up in the Soviet Union,” Lyusya admits, “I once believed it was the best country in the world.” But disillusionment came quickly. In her book, Lyusya explains why she and her family decided to leave Russia. (The book was published only in Russian, which is unfortunate because it means that non-Russian speakers cannot enjoy its funny, sad, mysterious stories.)

Lyusya’s book begins on a day when she was 17 and returning from a date with her fiancé, Alexander, during which they discussed their plans to get married. They had both just graduated from high school and planned to go to university. “Alexander wanted to become an actor, but I was hesitating between law and journalism, so the surest thing for me was to marry Alexander. The future seemed so bright and happy to us at that date,” she sighs. But the day was June 22, 1941 — the day Germany attacked the USSR. Alexander went off to the war. There would be no studying and no wedding for four long years.

Lyusya’s memories of the war brought a story of Nata, her dear school friend, whose dream was to be a ballerina. When the war began Nata chose to stay in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), because she did not want to leave her mother and siblings. That decision cost her life. A bomb destroyed her house, killed her brother, and left Nata paralyzed.

Lyusya and her mother, who had managed to evacuate from Leningrad to Siberia, sent Nata money so that Nata could buy fruits. “We did not know that it was already impossible to buy bread in Leningrad.” Nata had died of starvation. “Nata’s death made me an orphan,” Lyusya laments.

Lyusya has a story in the book about another friend who was trapped in Leningrad during the 900-day German blockade of the city. The friend, named Alexandra Christiani, tried to keep her beloved dog alive by giving it half of her four-ounce allotment of bread (the only food for the whole day in Leningrad during the blockade). One day a crying woman came and pleaded for Alexandra to give her the dog, so that she could feed her starving child. At first Alexandra wanted to close the door, but then she changed her mind and gave the dog to the woman.

Lyusya’s book is not only about tragedy. One story is about a friend who had a painting of his grandfather by an unknown artist. His wife asked him to sell it, but he was told that it was worth nothing and that he could sell only the frame. He sold the frame and threw the painting in the garbage dump. Several years later he found out from his cousin that the unknown boy from Vitebsk who had painted their grandfather’s portrait had become famous. The boy’s name was Marc Chagall.

One of Lyusya’s stories is about honesty and friendship. “My mother, who had a good education in Germany before the Russian revolution and spoke three foreign languages, could not find a job after the revolution,” Lyusya says. Faina, a good friend, suggested that her mother earn money by knitting. Lyusya’s mother took Faina’s advice and soon she had many clients. But for most of the Soviet era it was forbidden to conduct private business for money. Lyusya’s mother was arrested. She was set free only because her lawyer was able to bribe the judge. “But she was most saddened to learn later that she had been arrested because the informant who had reported to the authorities that she was knitting for money was her friend Faina, who was envious of her commercial success,” Lyusya says. Many years have passed, but Faina’s betrayal still hurts Lyusya. She looks very sad when she remembers this story.

Lyusya’s book includes stories of people she has known who were famous, and those who were just a degree from the famous. These include a woman who was a close friend of Stalin’s wife; daughters of Brezhnev and Khrushchev; and Khrushchev’s wife. Lyusya met a woman who lived next door to Lenin’s mother. She had brushes with the famous Russian actors Oleg Efremov and Iya Savvina, with the singer Isabella Yurieva, and with Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Lyusya chuckles that though she and her husband have lived a life far from famous people, they have met them on their way very often.

The book reflects Lyusya’s sadness that most of her friends suffered from the Soviet system. One such friend was Irina Gogua. Irina’s father, Kallistrat Gogua, was Stalin’s friend before the revolution. He once helped Stalin by telling him that he was about to be arrested, and giving him money to

escape the arrest. When Stalin took power, he paid Kallistrat back by having him arrested and then killed.

Kalistrat’s daughter also had to pay. Irina was one of the closest friends of Stalin’s second wife, Nadezhda Allilueva. After Nadezhda died, Irina was arrested, leaving her three-year-old daughter alone. Irina was released from prison only after Stalin’s death. (Lyusya’s story about Irina was used in the movie “Nadezda, the Wife of Stalin,” directed by Slava Zukermann.)

Lyusya remembers her mother crying when Stalin died. Being from a rich family she had lost everything with the revolution and never accepted the Soviet system. Nevertheless, she was afraid it would be worse after Stalin’s death. “It did not get worse, but it did not get better either,” Lyusya says.

In the 1980s, Lyusya and Alexander decided to leave the USSR. “We decided to leave at a point when we had a relatively stable life,” Lyusya says. But the outside stability could not compensate for the lack of trust in the future. “We wanted our grandson to live in a better country,” she says. First, their daughter and her family left, but Lyusya and Alexander could not get permission to leave for eight years. Their requests for exit visas were repeatedly rejected, possibly because Alexander had been a military officer.

Although Lyusya and her husband were already retired when they came to the U.S., they both enrolled in college. Alexander attended Touro College and his picture and a brief biography were published in The National Dean’s List, which honors America’s outstanding college students, for 1992-1993.

Lyusya and Alexander communicate mostly with Russian speakers. “I’d love to make more American friends, but my English is not good enough to make American friends easily,” Lyusya laments. Lyusya and Alexander stay in touch with their friends in Russia, who invite them to visit. “But neither of us wants to go to Russia or feels any nostalgia for it,” she says. However, they follow the news from Russia through Russian-language newspapers and television. “We see the changes happening in Russia, but we do not believe, as some people do, that it has changed completely.”

Lyusya and Alexander’s grandson, Anton, earned *summa cum laude* degrees in both finance and art from the University of Pennsylvania. Anton now studies law at Harvard and is one of the best students. Anton came to the U.S. when he was two years old. “He is now a real American,” Lyusya says proudly. Anton is interested in many things, but his interest in Russia is not deep. When he was choosing which language to study in school, Lyusya and Alexander suggested Russian but Anton chose French. “We understand his lack of warm feelings for Russia because he remains angry about what Soviet politics did to his family,” Lyusya says.

This year, as they do every year, Lyusya and Alexander celebrated the Fourth of July, which for them is a family reunion. “It is a great holiday and it is now our holiday too,” Lyusya says. The last sentence in Lyusya’s book is “God bless America,” and it is what she really feels.

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