

Next issue
in two weeks:
Sat., Mar. 19

The Main Street WIRE™

25th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Islander Audrey Maurer, at the site of Santo Tomas Internment Camp in the Philippines, during a 60th anniversary observance last month.

Islander, in Philippines, Marks Camps' Liberation

by Mary Cavanaugh

Dr. Audrey Maurer, a 27-year Island resident, attended a ten-day celebration of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Philippines internment camps created by the Japanese for American civilians during World War II. The celebration extended over ten locations, including traveling the route of the Bataan Death March and walking the final kilometer with a group that included one actual survivor.

Maurer wrote her dissertation on the female survivors of this barely explored chapter of history. Over a two-year period, she visited 13 states, traveled 38,000 miles, interviewed 50 people, and wore out five tape recorders. She found the women surprisingly willing to discuss, perhaps for the first time, what they had experienced. The dissertation, *No One Asked*, has created an emotional groundswell among the women, and has attracted publishers wanting her to offer the story for publication.

In Manila, the ceremonies lasted a full day and included what her guide termed a first-ever tour of the presidential palace. During a tour of the American Embassy (which was occupied by the Japanese and now houses photos and memorabilia on the internment camps), Audrey was called upon, as an expert, to deliver an impromptu report on the war-crimes trial that was held there. Many of the 30 or so survivors in attendance were helpful in providing previously unavailable identification for faces and events captured in the photos. Another exhibit at the University of Santo Tomas, which the occupiers used as an internment camp from 1942 through early 1945, was attended by the U.S. Ambassador, a Philippine senator, documentary film makers, and international members of the press.

The 60-year anniversary seems to have kindled new interest in the subject of POWs and internees in general. It marked the world premiere of a new American/Japanese movie dealing with the subject, starring Benjamin Bratt and Connie Neilson.

When asked what most touched her, Maurer said, "These women opened up and shared their stories with me. Most of them had never spoken about the experience, and seemed to think it was time."

Audrey is a graduate of Hunter College High School and Queens College. With her husband and three children, she lived in Africa for 20 years, teaching English and French, and learning Russian at the Soviet Embassy in Dakar, Senegal. Her facility with languages launched her career as a flight attendant with Pan Am and another career teaching French, Latin, and Russian at Hunter College High School.

She recently left the classroom to create a new position supervising Senior internships, off-campus courses at universities, and the school-wide community-service program at Hunter. She spends her summers teaching English Literature at Hawaii Pacific University.

Briefly...

An exhibit of **Louis I. Kahn's design for an FDR Memorial** at Southpoint Park, prepared by Cooper Union, will be on display at Gallery RIVAA March 12-27. Representatives of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute told the Residents Association Common Council Wednesday that it will raise some \$30 million for the memorial privately, relying on little or no public funding. In addition, the non-profit Friends of Roosevelt Island Landmarks announced it will undertake separate fundraising for permanent stabilization of the Smallpox Hospital ruins at Southpoint, if the Memorial project goes forward. A go-ahead for the project requires RIOC approval.

A **new credit union** is a step closer. USAlliance Federal Credit Union's board of directors voted last month to open an office here, probably in the former Montauk Credit Union space.

NYS Attorney General Spitzer Joins RIRA in Octagon Lawsuit

by Dick Lutz

The New York State Attorney General, Elliot Spitzer, has joined the Residents Association lawsuit against the Octagon Apartments project, filing a friend-of-the-court brief supporting the claim that the project violates the 2002 Roosevelt Island Open Spaces Law.

Attorney Dan Quart, who has taken the case for the Residents Association, announced the development Wednesday night at the meeting of the RIRA Common Council, hours after filing additional papers in the case.

Friday morning, hours after the Thursday night press deadline for this issue of *The WIRE*, the case was scheduled for oral arguments on a temporary restraining order (TRO) before Justice William A. Wetzel of the State Supreme Court. Because construction is well under way at the Octagon site, Wetzel is expected to rule on the TRO soon. (When a ruling is available, *The WIRE* will issue an e-mail bulletin. To subscribe to the free bulletin service, send an *AddMe* message to bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.)

RIRA had originally filed its suit *pro se* – that is, with its officers expecting to plead the case. Quart, who is a candidate for this district's City Council seat, took on the case after a RIOC filing pointed out that, as a corporation, RIRA must be represented by counsel. At Wednesday night's RIRA Council meeting, RIRA President Steve Marcus paid tribute to Quart for taking on the case. Quart, in turn, gave credit to Edward Lloyd, a professor of environmental law at Columbia University, and Lloyd's students, who have assisted in preparation of the case.

Case documents filed by RIRA ask the court to order a stop to construction, saying, "Damage to Octagon Park has already been done, and there is a great likelihood that further damage and irreparable harm will occur without the court's intervention." Several large trees were removed from the site as early as last fall.

RIOC contends that available open park space at the Octagon site will be increased about a quarter of an acre by construction of the 512-unit project, pointing out that part of the area has been unavailable for years because of the presence of uncontrolled plant



Attorney Dan Quart announced developments in the Octagon suit at Wednesday night's RIRA meeting. Margie Smith and Steve Marcus, Vice President and President of RIRA, are petitioners in the case.

growth and rubble from the demolished Lunatic Asylum. The Octagon tower, the only remnant of the Asylum, is to be restored as part of the project, which would make much of the former park area a partially enclosed courtyard of the new building. RIRA has decried this as an inappropriate use of the land, which was designated as an "ecological park" in the Island's original General Development Plan, commonly known as the "GDP." The Attorney General's brief says, on this point, "Building 13-story housing towers on the 2.5 acres of land 'surrounding' the landmark does not improve the *use* of that land as open space."

The RIRA papers point out that the RIOC Board initially passed a resolution conditioning its approval of the Octagon project on specific approval by the State Legislature, then later passed a replacement resolution leaving out that condition, but approached Assemblymember Pete Grannis, who sponsored the 2002 law that RIRA claims forbids construction, seeking amendment of the law to including explicit language permitting the project. Grannis refused, and has filed papers supporting the RIRA claim.

Legal papers that have been made available to *The WIRE* are posted with this issue of the newspaper on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com.

Island Groups Plan March 19 Benefit Concert for Orphan Victims of Tsunami

by Anri Wheeler

Roosevelt Island House is about to be built for Indonesian orphans of the December tsunami, and Island groups are staging a benefit concert to fund it.

The Residents Association, the PTA, and Manhattan Park are working together on the project. Roosevelt Island House will be part of a multi-house project in Sumatra that is to become home to four orphans of December's tsunami.

Several well-known entertainers, all Roosevelt Island residents, will perform March 19 at Manhattan Park Theater Club in a 7:30 concert. Tickets are \$20 per person, \$10 for seniors and disabled. They will

be available in advance from members of the RIRA Common Council, or at the door, or by calling **212-838-2397**.

Performers will include Tex Allen of Island House, one of Roosevelt Island's best-known musicians. Allen plays trumpet and piano and has been a regular fixture of the New York jazz scene for close to three decades.

Also performing will be Kay Story and Damon LaScot. Story, a violinist, pianist, and singer, has performed on Broadway in shows including *Jekyll & Hyde* and *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. She met LaScot, a guitarist, writer, and producer, while working as a singer on tour with the Trans-Siberian Orchestra. Janice Pendarvis and Mike Daly will sing, as well. Pendarvis, a Rivercross resident, has been seen on PBS and has also worked as a back up singer for Sting. Daly, a Language Arts and Social Studies teacher at PS/IS 217, is seen at the Sunday Night Spotlight Series at the Metropolitan Café in Manhattan. He plays guitar and performs folk, Irish, and original songs.

At the end of the evening, swing dancers will perform and give a short lesson to interested members of the audience.

Groundbreaking for Roosevelt



Kay Story



Janice Pendarvis

Letters

To the Editor:

My wife and I moved into our apartment in Manhattan Park over 15 years ago. One or both garage elevators at the North end would be out of service occasionally but would be repaired in a few days. Now both elevators have been out of service for over a year. In his RIOC column in *The WIRE*, Mr. Berman would indicate what progress was being made to have them repaired and put back into service. “The contract is out for bids.” “The bids were too high.” “The contract is being re-bid.”

In the last few months, there has been no mention of what progress, if any, is being made. My wife and I are both in our eighties, and we are finding it more and more of a hardship to negotiate the stairs, especially when we return from a shopping trip with a full cart of groceries. Using the South elevators is not an option. It is not convenient. There has been no adjustment in the parking fee because of the lack of elevator service.

We are very upset and would like some assurance that the elevators will be repaired and back in service in the very near future.

Eli Jack Held

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

Thank you for your survey of Roosevelt Island residents in regard to the Main Street retail area.

It is good that you are considering the poor state of the retail on the Island but I expect that you would get much better analysis and suggestions if your task force also consulted a professional urban retail consultant and/or urban designer. I am attaching an announcement of a seminar on urban retail planning soon to be held at Harvard that features current concepts that would probably be relevant to Roosevelt Island.

One of the primary reasons that Main Street merchants have problems is that there is no transient parking available. The entire street is continuously filled with dead “entitlement” parking and it is impossible to stop to pick up something from a shop, deliver something to a shop or, for that matter, impossible for residents to pick up and drop off without double parking. All of the “entitlement” parking should be eliminated and relocated so that Main Street has transient parking available like most streets in New York residential neighborhoods. Transient parking will contribute to the vitality of the street and retail.

Survey items:

1. I hope the mention of “major retail” does not suggest an Ikea or WalMart, and I wonder where “major retail” might possibly be located. We need to develop and strengthen our neighborhood retail so that Main Street is more vibrant, like most streets in New York residential neighborhoods.

2. “Beautification” or “sprucing up” is not an adequate concept for dealing with the problems of retail on the Island. Structural solutions will be needed to vitalize the area. Transient parking would be an example. Retail signs and graphics with more visibility, particularly at the arcade areas, would be another. Design and operating standards for the stores would be another.

3. There are many problems with the existing retail, including:

- A total lack of ventilation, resulting in a stale smell in many stores
- A lack of visibility into stores because the merchant has covered the windows with merchandise

- Worn and shabby entrances and interior finishes
- Poor quality of merchandise

4. If the general retail environment were upgraded as a result of a professionally directed program, the current retail operators would probably tend to respond with improvements in their operations and services.

5. Tourists often visit Roosevelt Island and find nowhere to go, really. I am not sure what kind of attraction would encourage tourism.

6. There should be something here with a river view serving food.

7. There should be a coffee shop with wireless internet service.

Robert Gray AIA

**Letters deadline for March 19 issue:
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After deadline, letters are considered on a space-available basis.



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To the Editor:

After what happened in Davos, Switzerland very recently, where the wealthiest men and women of the world discussed our world’s economies and many other crucial topics that deal with humankind, I believe that these same people could be contacted to help build Louis I. Kahn’s vision of an FDR Memorial for Southpoint, as well as the Wild Gardens and the rehabilitation of the magnificent ruins.

Most of the topics that they discussed had to do with providing much more to the billions of people of the world who live in extreme need of everything that the developed countries take for granted. All that these most worldly, success-

ful, and wealthy people seem to want is exactly what Roosevelt called for in the Four Freedoms speech, and what Kahn honored in the best manner possible. A splendid future can only await those who commit money for a museum or conference center as possibilities for the rehabilitated ruins, for the creation of the Wild Gardens, and finally, for the construction of the incredibly serene and powerful memorial park Louis Kahn designed.

This is the right time, this is the right location, this is the right message to be seen by the world over. The United Nations and the whole City could only add to it and benefit from it for more than decades to come.

Like Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and soon the Freedom Tower at Ground Zero, Kahn’s memorial, the rehabilitated ruins, and the Wild Gardens (like the ones I saw in Santa Barbara, California) could only enhance what New York symbolizes for the world, especially since September 11.

I know that, during the harshest times of American history, very magnificent memorials, parks, and edifices were erected to keep visitors from all corners of the world aware of what America stands for, and will always stand for, be it in Philadelphia, Washington, Boston, New York, or the Rocky Mountains.

Laurence Marie Lacoste-Brodsky

Commentary

Questions for a Changing Island

by Robert Chira

As reported in *The Main Street WIRE* (February 19), the City Council dropped a “bombshell” on owners of Mitchell-Lama housing – a 50-year extension in tax abatements for keeping their buildings in the housing program. But some owners, who had been facing increased City real-estate taxes as their original 30-year exemptions were nearing expiration, have already filed a notice of intent to withdraw from Mitchell-Lama, including the owners of Westview and Eastwood.

Owners who complete a withdrawal process of about a year are freed from State rent regulation. Eastwood tenants eligible for Federal Section 8 assistance are protected, but for all others, rents can be raised to what the unregulated free market will bear.

The City Council’s action was an effort to arrest a growing crisis brought on by departures from Mitchell-Lama. In 2003 alone, 43 buildings were pulled out of the program, according to a recent study made by NYU’s Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy (www.law.nyu.edu/realestatecenter).

These withdrawals and the risk of even more of them led to the truly extraordinary decision by the City Council – to forgo substantial real-estate tax revenues in an attempt to protect existing tenants from draconian rent increases.

In terms of its effect on the Island’s four Mitchell-Lama buildings, the Council’s action may cause the owners of Eastwood, Island House, and Westview to reconsider their plans to withdraw. These owners have to reexamine the fundamental issue:

• *Should they continue the process of withdrawing from the system, pay off their outstanding State mortgage, incur real estate taxes, and hope to recover those extra costs plus earn greater profits through higher rents than the 6% profit allowed under Mitchell Lama?*

• *Or should they stay in the system, continue to pay off the low-cost State mortgage, accept the substantial benefits of real estate tax abatements, and remain content with a 6% profit?*

If they withdraw, another question arises: *Whether to continue rentals, or to sell units – either to current tenants (possibly at reduced insider prices) or in the open market.*

In the current very speculative housing market for rentals, coops and condominiums, the extension of tax abatements may not stop the Island’s owners from leaving the system. The current “feverish” market (which some compare to the “dot-com bubble”) has encouraged owners to believe profits will be greater outside Mitchell-Lama than within it.

Tenant Options

To protect themselves from much higher rentals, and retain rights to remain as tenants or to become owners, tenants in Island House and Westview, and those not receiving federal subsidies in Eastwood, must try to find a way to stop or alter the owner’s withdrawal plans, or find some leverage to negotiate a deal with the owners that restrains price increases in renewal leases or allows the tenants to purchase their units at favorable discounts.

To obtain mortgages from private sources when leaving Mitchell-Lama, the partnership that owns Island House and Westview is very likely to need extensions of the ground leases for their buildings. Eastwood’s owner apparently seeks to withdraw from the system without an extension of the current ground lease.) That’s a decision for the RIOC Board to make as the

lessor of the ground leases. Tenants could mount a campaign to pressure the State to use its power over ground leases to ensure that withdrawal of Westview and Island House from Mitchell-Lama will not lead to massive disruptions.

Other courses – pressuring Albany to amend the Rent Stabilization Law or require a longer stay in the Mitchell-Lama program – are difficult to achieve and pose significant legal obstacles. Lawmakers know that any modification of owners’ rights under Mitchell-Lama would very likely generate a significant legal challenge.

Rivercross

Rivercross is owned by its resident shareholders. Under Mitchell-Lama, they cannot profit from a resale. A committee of residents has been studying ways to withdraw from the system, a course that would mean giving up tax abatements and getting a private mortgage to replace the State mortgage. To obtain a mortgage from a private lender, Rivercross also must obtain an extension of its ground lease. The specifics of

a withdrawal plan must be presented to the tenant-shareholders, and approval will require a two-thirds vote. Apartment prices in the new Southtown condominium building create additional support for those who want to obtain market values for their Rivercross units, while the City Council’s 50-year extension of tax abatements is likely to persuade others that the building should stay in the system.

Southtown Influence

At the new Southtown condominium, sales personnel say sales are brisk, and offering prices have been going up in a series of amendments to the offering plan. The ninth and tenth price amendments have just been filed, but the eighth continues to list many of

the same apartments for sale and the developer hasn’t provided sales figures, so it’s not clear how strong the market is for the units at the prices being offered.

Outcomes

If the process of Mitchell-Lama withdrawals continues to unfold and the condominium units are sold at the current asking prices, many questions arise:

• How will the new condominium owners and higher-income tenants (or unit owners) affect the Island community?

• Will this result in new restaurants and shops that cater to a more affluent clientele?

• Will it help restore and invigorate the current shops and fill up empty storefronts?

• Will Southtown become a separate community, with its high wall across the existing Main Street?

• Will Riverwalk have its own shops, restaurants and amenities that cater mainly to its residents?

• Will many of the new owners in Riverwalk be corporations and governments, with a revolving door of short-term occupants?

Or will families move in to put down roots in the Island community?

One certain effect of the new condominium’s residents is that both the Tram and subway will be more crowded at rush hours. Other effects are uncertain, but one trend is clear: Riverwalk residents will be more affluent, on average, than the Island’s current population. The upscale drift will be underscored as Eastwood apartments gradually go market-rate as present occupants leave, and underscored further if the Island’s Mitchell-Lama buildings complete withdrawals that leave apartments renting or selling at higher prices.



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

Three snowstorms notwithstanding, February has been a relatively quiet month on Roosevelt Island. But, as spring approaches, activities on the Island will pick up. I'd like to tell you about a few items of interest.

The Article 78 petition filed to stop the destruction of Octagon Park

By the time you read this, RIRA's petition to get a temporary restraining order (TRO) on the Octagon project will have been submitted for the judge's consideration and he may have already made his ruling. I'm told that there are two criteria for granting a TRO: 1) that irreversible damage could be done while a case is being adjudicated, and 2) that the petitioner's case has "a reasonable chance of winning." So, if our request is granted, then the prospects for keeping Octagon park a park are improved. If not... Well, you can make your own inferences.

Regardless of success or failure, we owe Dan Quart, our attorney, true and heartfelt gratitude. He has worked with great dedication and ability to represent our interests. Dan is running for the City Council seat in our district, and he has already provided excellent public service to our community. Dan is assisted by Professor Edward Lloyd, Clinical Professor in Environmental Law at Columbia Law School, and his two hard-working students, Vivian Mills and Rahul Agarwal. Thanks also to our State Assemblymember, Pete Grannis, for his strong support and excellent advice and legal support, and to the Attorney General's office for a knockout "amicus" brief. They sure convinced me; now let's see if they convince the judge.

Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) – This is a program that trains citizens to prepare for and respond to emergencies in their local communities. CERT training sessions are held at various times

Well, winter has been upon us again. I was hoping – as I am sure everyone else has – that spring would arrive sooner than later. Alas, it was not to be, as we have had three significant snowfalls in the past ten days.

All of which brings me to the Herculean efforts of the RIOC grounds crew who worked overnight to clear the street and sidewalks from the eight inches we received Monday. They deserve a big round of applause and they have my thanks for their hard effort.

Now that March has finally arrived, let's hope for a change in the weather. The calendar says that warm weather can't be far away.

As many of you know from experience, the Island's red buses are on their last legs, which is good, because if their length of use is factored in they should have been taken out of service years ago. Thanks to our workers in the bus garage and their magic, the buses are still running. But the good news is that new buses are on order and should be here sometime next year. You can't just go down to the bus lot and make a pick, as you would a car; they have to be ordered first and then are built. The Orion buses are being manufactured upstate and will use hybrid technology, to operate on a mix of diesel fuel and electricity, providing better fuel economy and cleaner exhaust. These are much the same as the buses the MTA has on order as well, although not in the same voluminous quantity, but we did get in on the

for different communities. There will be a training session starting in our area in the April/May time frame. The training is done in two-hour increments over an 11-week period. Volunteers are taught the basics in first aid, fire safety, light search and rescue, etc. The CERT volunteers become the second-response team aiding the first responders (e.g., police, firefighters, etc.) during a time of emergency. I urge anyone who's able to be part of this team to e-mail me to sign up for the sessions. If you want more information about CERT, see: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/oem/html/programs/cert.html>.

RIRA Benefit for Tsunami Orphans – A lot of folks in the PTA, RIRA, Manhattan Park, and Orphans International are diligently preparing for the benefit for the tsunami orphans to be held at Manhattan Park Theater on Saturday night, March 19. This is very much an Island event, with professional musicians and singers Kay Story and Damon LaScot, Janice Pendarvis and Tex Allen, and PS 217 teacher Mike Daly. We'll also have a swing-dance performance and we can all hit the floor ourselves. All proceeds will go Orphans International to build *Roosevelt Island House* for orphaned kids in Sumatra. This is a good cause, helps a fine charity and it will be a fun evening with your friends and neighbors. Plan to be there!

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

price break from the MTA order.

Over the years, street lighting has been a bone of contention on the Island, with competing standards, who is responsible for which lights, and on and on. Now RIOC is looking at a plan to upgrade the Island's lights to comply with New York City technical requirements. The upshot of this is that the City will maintain the lights, and this is no small thing considering the maintenance and manpower costs. The new fixtures we are testing now are attractive stanchions taken from a 1938 design that graced the Island in years long past. These will be phased in.

Finally, people have been asking why they haven't seen much of Public Safety Director James Fry in recent weeks. Unfortunately, Mr. Fry has been quite ill, but is now on the mend. We hope to see him back strolling Main Street when the warm weather returns. Please keep him in your thoughts as we all wish him a speedy recovery.

The RIRA Column

The RIOC Column

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 will not be published*.

Preferred method of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file), 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. **All letters subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

– Clarifications & Corrections –

The WIRE's February 19 report on the City Council's 50-year extension of Mitchell-Lama tax exemptions contained these conflicting statements:

"The new partner in Island House and Westview, the Sheldrake Organization, has announced it will take the buildings out of Mitchell-Lama, and has taken initial steps in that direction in each building," and the following statement, supplied by Sheldrake: "Sheldrake is open to any options as we continue our discussions with Westview and Island House, including privatization under Mitchell-Lama. The reality is that Mitchell-Lama regulations would likely reduce the incentive for home ownership... Sheldrake's intent has always been to reach an agreement that would benefit everyone."

"Privatization under Mitchell-Lama" is not possible, because "privatization" means a private mortgage rather than a State mortgage; moving to a private mortgage removes a building from Mitchell-Lama. Following publication of the February 19 issue, Sheldrake asked *The WIRE* to correct the statement, "...the Sheldrake Organization has announced it will take the buildings [including Island House] out of Mitchell-Lama." That formal announcement has been made, in fact, only in the case of Westview, and *The WIRE* regrets the error.

Asked for a clarification of its willingness to move toward resident ownership under Mitchell-Lama for either Westview or Island House, Sheldrake provided this statement on Wednesday: "As we move forward in negotiations, out of respect for the tenants, Sheldrake will consider, review and discuss all options solely with the tenant representatives in both Westview and Island House. This will hopefully yield fruitful negotiations that will achieve our common goal."

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Soubosus Stars performance to benefit CAUSE, Congolese Athletic Unified & Social Enrichment, **Sat., Mar. 5**, 8:00 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater.

Works of Portrait Artist Dianne Robbins, continuing through the month, in the Rivercross window gallery, presented by the Mother Earth Committee.

Island Schools of Art continues at Gallery RIVAA through tomorrow (Mar. 6), featuring art of the children of Roosevelt Island's schools – PS/IS 217, the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, The Child School, and Legacy High School. 11-5 Saturdays and Sundays, 6-9 Wednesdays and Fridays.



– The Coming Week –

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

Free Tax Help continues for middle- and low-income taxpayers, with special attention for those 60 and over, **Tuesdays**, 9:30-1:00, Senior Center; or call **212-751-9241**.

Child School / Legacy High School Science Fair, **Wed.-Fri., Mar. 9-10-11**, 12:30-1:30 daily, TCS/Legacy building on the promenade at Rivercross (537 Main Street). Community invited to meet students and see their experiments. Information: **212-223-5055**.

RIOC Board of Directors Meeting, **Thur., Mar. 10**, 4:30 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. The Board's afternoon meetings usually conclude with an early-evening opportunity for public questions and comment, specific time uncertain.

River Music's Annual Irish Night, **Fri., Mar. 11**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Admission free; suggested donation, \$6.

The Louis Kahn FDR Memorial for Southpoint, **Sat., Mar. 12**, 6-9 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street. Exhibit through Mar. 27.

– Future Events –

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 Eric Kraft. Copies available at the branch.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., Mar. 19**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an "Add Me" message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Friday, Mar. 11; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Mar. 14; inserts due Thur., Mar. 17. **Future issues:** 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. **News phone, 212-826-9055**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**. **To list your organization's Island-related event here**, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions. There is no charge for such listings.

Roosevelt Island's Tsunami Orphans Benefit, sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, **Sat., Mar. 19**, 7:30 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater, featuring the Island's professional music and dance performers, including Kay Story, Janice Pendarvis, Damon LaScot, Mike Daly, and others. \$20 (seniors and disabled \$10). See story, page 1.

Eastwood Building Committee Auction, **Sat., Mar. 26**, 7:00 p.m., Senior Center, 546 Main Street. Donations of goods and services being accepted now. Call **212-755-4089**.

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

La Leche League meeting for breastfeeding and pregnant women, **Mon., Apr. 4**, 1:00 p.m., 20 River Road #5P. Information: **212-832-1188**.

Residents Association Common Council Meeting, **Wed., Apr. 6**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd (lower level). Open to all; an opportunity to address the Council is included near the start of each meeting.

Senior Center

Monday
10:00, **Computers for Beginners**
10-11, **Latchhook Class**
10-11:30, **English as 2nd Language**
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
1:00, **Tai Chi**
7:00, **Dance Class** (Beginners)

Tuesday
10:00, **Chinese massage**
2:00, **Bingo**
6:00, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well**
10:00, **Computers**
10:00, **Spanish Class**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
12-2, **Painting & Sculpting**
7:00, **Pokeno** (RISA)

Thursday
9:30, **Chinese Massage**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance**

Friday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
1:00, **Bridge**
7:00, **Games** (RISA)

Saturday
7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)

Special Events

Wed., Mar. 16, Atlantic City trip.
Thur., Mar. 17, St. Patrick's Day Party
Mon., June 13, five-day motor coach tour to Niagara Falls.

Home-delivered meals: **212-744-5022**, ext. 1203

The **Public Safety Blotter** for the last half of February is now available on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2513/lot2513.html.

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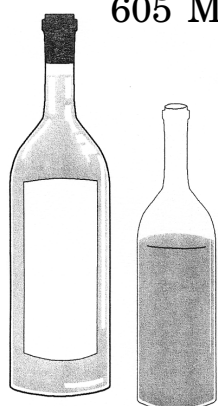
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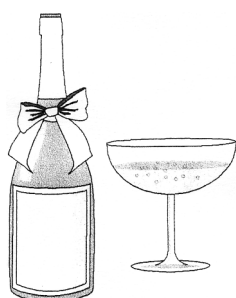
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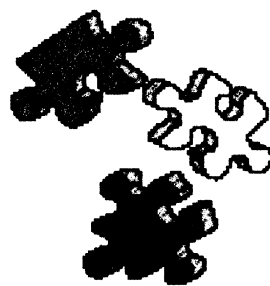
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BY JOSH OZERSKY

Pizza in New York, like cramped quarters and civic pride, is written in the city's cultural DNA.

A New Yorker who eats only at Pizza Hut is in the position of a Texan who can't stand guns; he can be comfortable, but never truly at home. And coal-oven pizza, such as the type served at Sac's Place, is the essence of what makes New York's pizza great.

The reason is in the volcanic temperature that only coal-fired ovens can achieve. (Forget "brick oven"; it's the fuel that matters.) A pizza's bottom gets brown and crisp in 900-degree heat before the interior of even a thin pie can dry out; as a result, coal pizza has a complex texture that gas-oven pizzas can't even aspire to.

Before getting to the matter of the pizza, though, let's get the rest of the menu out of the way. Everything at Sac's is of high quality, and real care is taken with it.

Owner Anthony Sacramone grows all the oregano, rosemary, basil and anise at his family's house in Pennsylvania. The tomatoes are all San Marzano, the best you can buy. Sacro-



Anthony and Domenico Sacramone of Sac's Place serve pizzas and entrees seasoned with home-grown herbs.

mone buys all the vegetables at the market himself.

The upshot is that, while they don't get the coal-oven treatment, most of the entrees are first-rate, if a little conventional. The tomatoes enliven the sauce on dishes such as chicken Fiorentino, with its compact bundle of tender chicken, cohesive eggplant and fresh mozzarella. Other things to order without fear are Sicilian-style baked ziti, densely laden with eggplant, irresistible under its blanket of fresh mozzarella; delicious roasted peppers; and shrimp in garlic

sauce and mussels in white wine. (These last two, while both good, are neither as big nor as briny as you might hope.)

The main reason to go to Sac's, though, is the pizza, and it is fantastic. The telltale random crust bubbles and tiny black spots on the bottom tell the tale of coal heat, but it isn't until you bite into the slice that you get the coal effect. This isn't the thin, matzo-like crust, so delicate and austere, served at Coney Island's Totunno's or the thick, cake-like confection of Manhattan's Artur-o's (to mention two of its coal-

oven cousins). It's just thick enough to support the toppings, to avoid tip sag and to give a pleasing contrast between the crisp crust and the moist, sweet dough in the middle.

The toppings are well proportioned to the pie, and masterfully selected for pizza duty: The fresh mozzarella is partially dried, so it melts right without losing that milky taste; the pepperoni doesn't ooze grease into the cheese; the tomatoes are sweet and vivid; the spinach nicely sauteed; and the meatballs, scattered rather than sliced, are unmistakably homemade.

I would avoid the white pie, whose ricotta load keeps the crust from browning nicely; but don't miss out on the Sicilian slice, cooked in a gas oven rather than the coal one. With its gorgeously oily bottom crust, airy dough and lush tomato taste, this might be the best slice this side of Midwood.

If you get a whole pie to go, reward yourself with a square slice; after all, if you care about pizza — and what New Yorker doesn't? — you've done the right thing by coming here.

Save the Date!

Saturday, March 19, 7:30 PM

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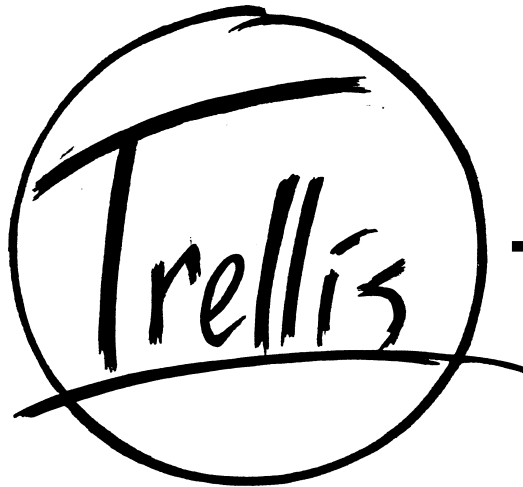
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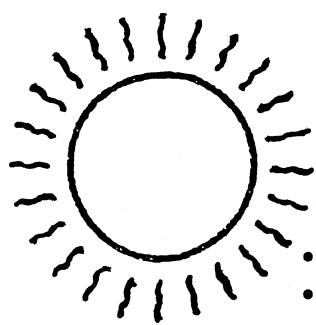
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**Deadline for March 19 issue: Tuesday, March 15
Deadline for April 2 issue: Tuesday, March 29**

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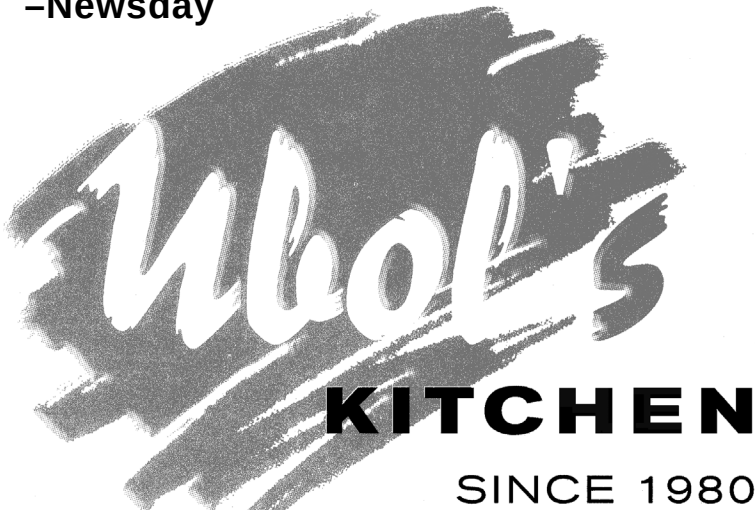
Julie Palermo, head of the Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce, has supplied a list of donors to the Island's Main Street Holiday Lighting Fund. She points out that the fund is still short of its goal, and says it's not too late to contribute. Julie can be reached at **646-331-3445**.

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