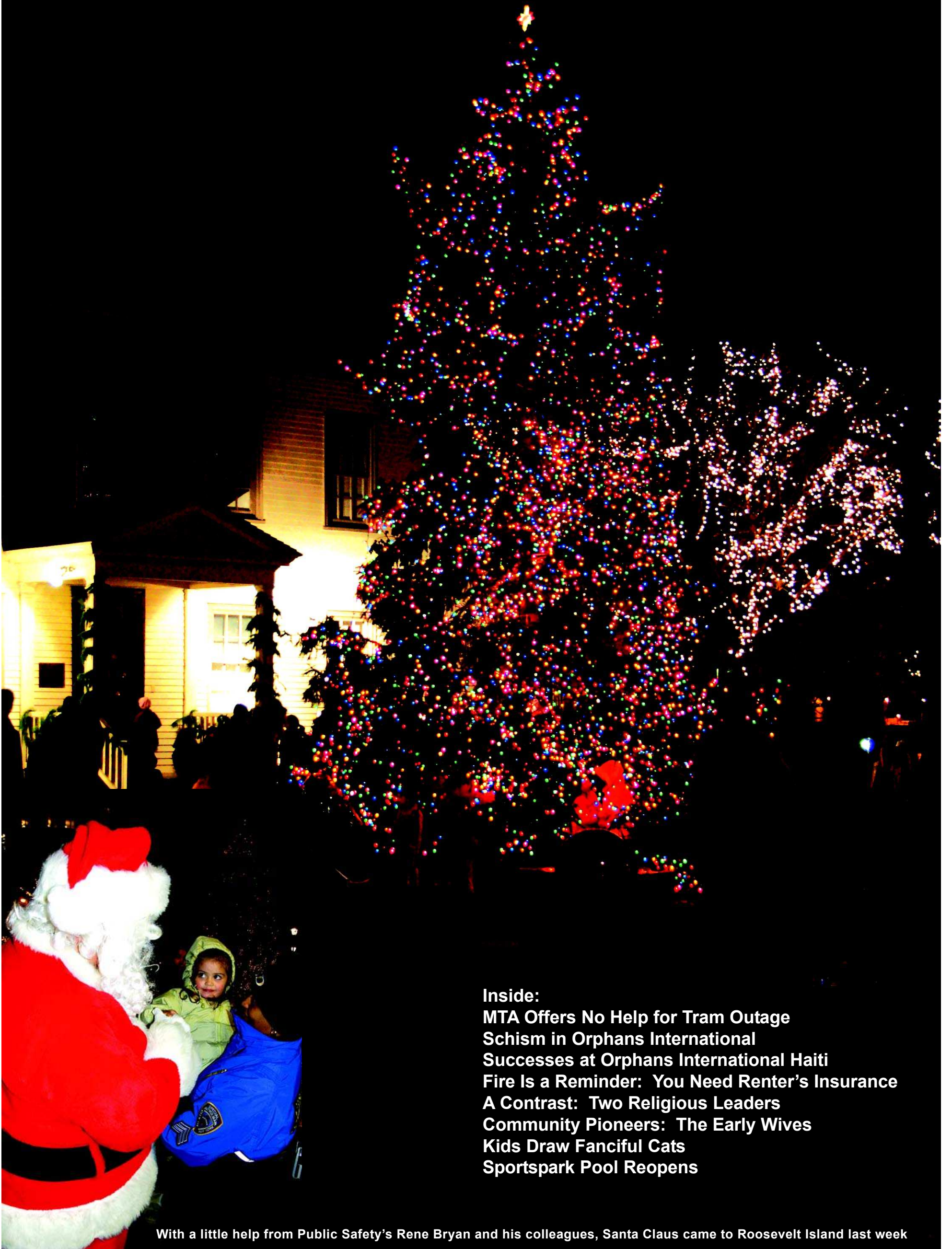


The Main Street **WIRE**

Saturday, December 12, 2009



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MTA Offers No Help for Tram Outage

Schism in Orphans International

Successes at Orphans International Haiti

Fire Is a Reminder: You Need Renter's Insurance

A Contrast: Two Religious Leaders

Community Pioneers: The Early Wives

Kids Draw Fanciful Cats

Sportspark Pool Reopens

With a little help from Public Safety's Rene Bryan and his colleagues, Santa Claus came to Roosevelt Island last week

concerts

The Rosemarie & Robin Russell Family Concert Series presents

an all-bach holiday celebration

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Adam Hollander oboe

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Sat., Jan. 16, 2010

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A Wednesday meeting between a group of Islanders and MTA personnel was delayed 30 minutes while MTA officials ejected reporters who had come to report on the meeting. Residents Association (RIRA) President Frank Farance is at left; former RIRA President Matthew Katz sits opposite him. At right is RIOC Board member Jonathan Kalkin; behind Kalkin is Assemblymember Micah Kellner, whose office set up the meeting.

MTA to RI: “You Have No Problems. We Have No Solutions.” *Delegation Leaves Meeting MT-Handed; Press Ejected, Barred from Observing*

by Dick Lutz

Roosevelt Islanders returning from a Wednesday morning meeting with a dozen MTA functionaries report that they got nothing from the transit agency by way of

a solution for the rush-hour capacity squeeze that is expected to become worse when the Tramway goes down in March, 2010.

The former president of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), Matthew Katz, said that the MTA refuses to acknowledge that there is a morning rush-hour problem at its Roosevelt Island stop. “If there’s no problem, you don’t need a solution,” Katz said, loosely characterizing the MTA’s level of concern about the difficulties that people here experience in boarding cars of the F train on weekday mornings.

An MTA official said that, during the long 2006 Tramway outage, the subway system absorbed the increase in traffic, and the MTA expects the 2010 outage also to be handled adequately. Katz said he pointed out that the Island’s population and demand for commuting transit have grown since 2006.

The MTA did not allow press coverage of the meeting. This reporter and blogger Rick O’Conor (of RooseveltIslander.blogspot.com) were escorted from the building by an employee who works in the public relations department, at the

behest of Alyssa Kosowsky, another MTA employee. When asked why Roosevelt Island readers would not be allowed to read an independent account of the meeting, Kosowsky (who is not allowed to speak to the press) responded, “It’s a different dynamic [when the press is present].”

Assemblymember Micah Kellner, who had asked the MTA for the meeting, concurred in the ban on press coverage, explaining, “The MTA won’t have the meeting if you are here.”

Current RIRA President Frank Farance had taken a specific solution to the meeting, hoping to persuade the MTA’s operations people that it should be tried, at least for the period of time that the Tramway is out of service. Farance says that he left the meeting hopeful that he will be allowed to analyze MTA data, which the MTA cites as showing that there is adequate capacity at Roosevelt Island at all times. Farance suspects that the data are faulty, and hopes to demonstrate that to the MTA, with the further hope that they will accept his findings and then act to correct the

See **MTA**, page 26

Charity Schism

Orphans International America Board “Fires” Founder, Islander Jim Luce

by Dick Lutz

Jim Luce, the Roosevelt Landings resident who founded Orphans International (OI) here a decade ago, has been separated from Orphans International America (OIA) by its board of directors, which has announced a name change to Better Future International (BFI).

Luce, terming the board’s action a “hostile takeover” of OIA, says that Orphans International Worldwide (OIWW), which he sees as an umbrella organization over the OI affiliates in donor nations and project nations, has “decertified” Orphans International America.

The OIA board’s action was announced in a November 21 letter to donors with no explanation beyond a two-sentence bullet point. It reads like a memo about an employee firing: “The founder of Orphans International America, Jim Luce, is no longer a part of the organization. We wish Jim well in his future endeavors and are truly grateful that he established such a worthy organization.”

In response to *WIRE* queries, the OIA/BFI board president, Kristie DeKoker, limits herself to the following explanation: “The board decided, in conducting a strategic

See **Orphans**, page 12



Jim Luce

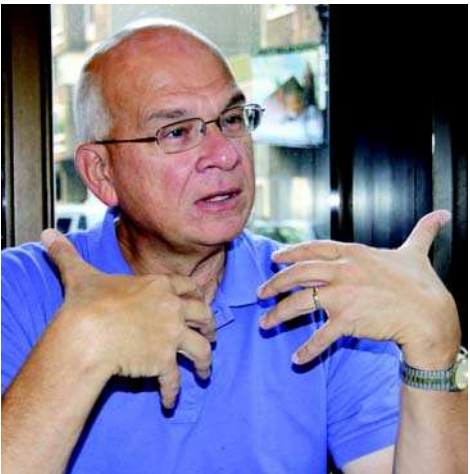
Diversity

An Orthodox Christian and a Rabbi Who’s Anything But Orthodox Islander Keller a Modern Circuit-Rider

by Jim Baehler

A church without walls, and a message of Christian orthodoxy, are part of the formula that Roosevelt Islander Tim Keller has devised to build a congregation in Manhattan that has grown from 50 parishioners 20 years ago to 5,000 today.

Your first impression of Tim Keller is his size. He is a tall man with an open countenance and a ready smile. He speaks quietly and with deeply held conviction, but with no attempt to impose his beliefs on others. In an age that leans to the secular, he does not shrink from describing himself as an orthodox Christian with a firm belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ and the historical accuracy of the Bible.



Keller’s wife, Kathy, describes him as “the most gentle, consensus-forming, peace-making individual I have ever met. He doesn’t like confrontation and can see something good in everyone.” Put simply, Tim Keller is no Elmer Gantry.

The Kellers were encouraged to move here by Glenn and Carole Kleinknecht, two of Tim’s original parishioners. “Our first impression was that [the Island] looked pretty institutional, like the Penn State campus. Our first impression as we were coming over the bridge wasn’t very positive, but when we came down and looked around, we said, ‘Yeah!’ We had three young children and, back then, Roosevelt Island was cheaper than Manhattan. It also allowed the kids a little more freedom to just run out the door, which was something you couldn’t do in Manhattan.

“We’ve really loved it here.”

Tim and Kathy have three sons. David, 31 years old, works on Wall Street for a small private equity firm. Michael, 29, is starting a college ministry with his wife, Sarah. Jonathan, 26, loves New York City, has an M.A. in urban planning, and is working part-time for a planning agency in the Bronx.

Tim was raised in Pennsylvania’s Lehigh

See **Keller**, page 10

Jersey’s Leana Moritt Visits to Serve

by Jim Baehler

You are finishing lunch in a midtown restaurant when two smartly dressed women enter and are shown to a table next to yours. You are immediately drawn to one whose vivacious personality and winning smile elicit approving looks from other diners. You note the pride with which she describes

the escapades of her three teen-aged sons and the genuine interest she displays in the comments of her friend. “Ah,” you say to yourself, “a

New York woman who can successfully combine a career with her responsibilities at home.” Then you notice something odd: Almost hidden in the abundant waves of her dark hair is a yarmulke. Your curiosity is piqued and as you pay your bill and rise to leave, you stop to say, “I’m sorry but I have to ask about the yarmulke. I thought only Jewish males wore them.”

“That used to be true,” she answers with a smile, “but I am Leana Moritt, Rabbi of the Jewish Congregation on Roosevelt Island.”

“A rabbi,” you respond in astonishment, “I had you pegged as a successful career woman.”

“I was that also,” she replies with a friendly laugh at your confusion.

“Only in New York,” you say to yourself as you walk away.



The road Leana Moritt took before coming to Roosevelt Island was long and winding, both spiritually and geographically. She was born in Brooklyn but her family moved to Mattituck, at the far end of Long Island, when she was 11 years old. Her father, a judge and State senator, retired and moved the family to their country home. Leana grew up in a non-observant Jewish family, giving little thought to Judaism or Jewish history. At Mattituck High School, she was the only Jew and her friends were all Christians. “At a certain point in my life, I had attended more church services than synagogue services,” she says. Surrounded by Christians, she became interested in the his

See **Moritt**, page 10



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The MTA, Hiding Incompetence

The MTA seems to think that it can hide the agency’s inability to serve the public by keeping reporters out of the meetings where, in response to good ideas, they give stock answers: “We don’t do that,” or “It can’t be done,” or “It’s against policy.”

The transit agency has a lot more ways of saying “no,” of course, but would apparently prefer to keep objective listeners out of the meetings where their technical people divert the attention of supplicants from problems and suggested solutions to relatively unimportant matters, while slipping some form of “no” into their responses.

As the story on page 3 reports, MTA personnel would not allow a meeting with Roosevelt Island leaders and officials to go forward on Wednesday morning until two reporters were escorted from the building. Oddly, this ensures that the MTA’s view of things will not be heard, since those attending such a session tend not to be objective in seeing how their ideas were treated, hoping against hope that there’s *some* crack in the closed-door minds of those charged with rejecting both the pleas for help and the ideas that would make that help possible.

Keeping the press out has the effect of keeping the public out.

The explanation, that “it’s a different dynamic” when the press is present, is another way of saying, “We don’t want you to *hear* us say ‘no,’ because then you’ll *report* it for what it is, rather than the smoke-screen with which we surround it.

Unfortunately, Assemblymember Micah Kellner is complicit – an accessory before, during, and after the fact in allowing the MTA to say “no” out of earshot of objective reporters. We can applaud him for responding to this publication’s call for a full-court press by elected officials to get the MTA moving on solutions rather than additional ways of refusing to help. But setting up a meeting in which they duck that responsibility and competent reporting is excluded makes him part of the problem: As long as the MTA can refuse help behind a door closed to the press, the public will not have a clear-headed assessment of what the MTAspeak (“no,” etc.) really means.

The MTA’s handling of the press aside, they’ve made it abundantly clear that they have no intention of being helpful in the transportation crisis that will arise when Roosevelt Island’s Tramway is down for six months (let alone the current rush-hour mess). They claim, despite abundant in-the-station evidence that it just isn’t so, that there is “plenty of capacity during the morning rush.” There isn’t, as is known by anyone knows who’s had to wait on the platform while unboardable trains go through and more competition for space accumulates on the platform.

So we’re left with a no-can-do agency that won’t supply capacity, gives us elevators that break down more regularly than the trains run, and operates escalators that often run the wrong way but *always* lecture us repetitively while multiple trains leave us behind in the morning.

Shame on the MTA. Shame for a bad job, and shame for hiding your meetings from the people.

DL

To the Editor:

I would like to thank Mr. Barry Fox, a Riverwalk resident, for his generous donation of a brand-new rug for the first-grade class in PS/IS 217. Because two classes were merged, the class grew to 30 students. They spend part of their morning routine sitting on a rug. Because this class became so big, some children did not fit on the rug and had to sit on the floor. Mainly thinking that winter is coming and the floor will get very cold, I brought this issue to the attention of Mr. Fox. He does not have any ties to the school, but immediately agreed to donate a rug from his rug business. It was installed at the begining of November. This is an example of how Roosevelt Islanders come to the help of others in the best way they can. I really appreciate Mr. Fox’s generosity, and Ms. Volpe, also a Riverwalk resident, who originally put me in contact with him.

Isabel Perez-Cruz

To the Editor:

I was heartened by Steve Shane’s mention of the library, sometimes a Roosevelt Island stepchild, in the November 7 *WIRE* (nyc10044.com/wire/3005/wire3005.html). It always seemed lacking that a model town would be launched sans a library. As one of many Roosevelt Islanders who couldn’t envision themselves living in a neighborhood without a library, we did it our way. As a member of the Board of Directors of Roosevelt Island Community Literary Associates (RICLA) over the years, I assisted David Bauer and other board members with developing support for the private, community library, and then, the transition to a public library.

Even as we developed funding to renovate the library at its present size and in its current location, we always saw this as temporary – expansion into the next-door Thrift Shop space was contemplated. Expansion into 504 Main is mentioned as a possibility by Mr. Shane (and discussed by Linda Heimer in her letter in the same issue).

Whichever the optimal choice between the two above, its location in the heart of the “old downtown” Main Street is important to the library and to a revitalization of Main Street.

We are staying tuned, Mr. Shane, and cheer you on, to see if the details of funding can be worked out with the City budget.

With our population surge, the next evolution of the library is timely now.

Lorraine Lasker

To the Editor:

Now I see the handwriting on the wall – literally, figuratively, a sinister sight:

Those huge, red, unsightly signs on the exterior walls of management and 546, pointing the poor pilgrim, the innocent wayfarer, the senior, the disabled, in short, the disenfranchised, to the back portals of 546 to access the elevator to spiritual guidance and/or cultural events.

O mighty RIOC, you have been weighed, you have been measured, and you have been found grievously wanting.

This completes the trilogy, and is probably my final word on this sad and shameful chapter in Roosevelt Island history.

To say that I am outraged and disheartened does not begin to describe my distress. I feel like Hugh in Llewelyn’s *How Green Was My Valley*. Pollution and corruption prevail. How green was my Island then.

Sharon Stern

To the Editor:

As a longtime resident of 4 River Road, I was surprised, yet happy, to read that the Public Service Commission had made a ruling favorable to Roosevelt Landings tenants to protect them from overcost charges from electric usage. Finally (!), something has been done to help this community – at least I had thought so.

After reading the *WIRE* article [Sept. 26, 2009, available at nyc10044.com/wire/3002/wire3002.pdf], I was truly angry and frustrated to see that there was no mention, not even a sentence, about the other residences of this community – to the low-income families of 2 and 4 River Road – occupied by senior citizens and children of families.

Simply put, this is a travesty and a disregard to the rest of this community.

Question: We, as residents, are part of this community, aren’t we?

Many times in the past, I have complained to Councilmember Jessica Lappin’s representatives, as well as to State Senator Jose Serrano’s office. I was most certainly and always told *we will look into this matter* or just, simply, *we’ll get back to you*.

Shouldn’t Mr. Kellner, Ms. Lappin, and Mr. Serrano include the residents of 2-4 River Road and its tenants? It seems to me that this submetering problem is a Roosevelt Island crisis and not just a certain-few crisis.

To just ignore the rights of other tenants is totally wrong. I understand if the people of 2-4 River Road cannot provide an adequate tenant association to resolve tenant concerns and protections. But maybe, when these politicians work for the people of Roosevelt Island, they should consider all of the people they serve.

I commend Mr. Kellner’s active pursuit to take on greedy property owners, but Mr. Kellner would best serve this community by including the rest of the people in the neighborhood. This problem was existing long before Roosevelt Landings and it will continue to affect those in my building.

As winter is approaching, I am concerned. I would appreciate your vigilance to our unfair burden, Mr. Kellner.

Claudio Pratts

To the Editor:

I am writing to correct a typo – ours – in last week’s advertisement for Island Cats. All donations to the organization *are* definitely tax-deductible. Our yearly neutering drives have cut back significantly on feral overpopulation. We are grateful for any support that will help us to feed the Island’s remaining six colonies of hungry cats, to build a permanent outdoor shelter, and to pay for veterinary expenses, including pre-adoption testing, shots, and neutering.

Jennifer Dunning

To the Editor:

Last year, I started attending the art class at the Senior Center, taught by Arline Jacoby at 2:30 every Tuesday. I find I had hidden talent (not very much), and I really enjoyed every session.

I write because Arline needs more students to keep the program going. If you want to have some fun and discover your hidden talent, I urge you to join us on Tuesdays.

Louise Maniloff

To the Editor:

Many have spoken with us about where to donate used clothing, etc., since the Cabrini Thrift Shop on Roosevelt Island is no longer giving tax-deductible receipts. We have found that the Salvation Army is a good place. They are located at 34-02 Steinway Street, Long Island City (718-472-2414). They accept donations Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. They will also pick up donations if you call 212-757-2311.

Susan and Malcolm Cohen

To the Editor:

I write to make your readers aware of the incredible job one man has done for our youth sports programs on Roosevelt Island. For several years, Brian King has been heavily involved with our baseball and soccer leagues. He’s coached all age groups in soccer and baseball, and even coached two soccer teams at once to get the league going. For the past two years, he has been the lead organizer for those sports for the Roosevelt Island Youth Program. While many fine people, administrators and coaches, are always involved in our leagues, Brian has been the main person responsible for the past two years.

All parents and kids are aware of Coach Tommy and his outstanding work with the youngest of our athletes. As they get older, all of the kids come to know Coach Brian just as well. Brian’s skill and unmatched dedication to our kids and the programs are such a boost to our leagues. He’s an excellent coach to the kids and a great motivator to the parents. What’s more amazing is that Brian is not even a Roosevelt Island resident. He discovered and joined our leagues many years ago and, fortunately for us, found something special in our community and decided to get more involved. His involvement has included coaching, umpiring, scheduling games, organizing evaluations and teams, and being the face of the league. And most folks may not know this, but Brian is a volunteer! Like most of us, he works full-time, but spends so much time on The Rock that he probably knows more kids and their parents than you and I.

So if you see Brian, or his kids who are always playing, and his wife, who comes every weekend to cheer them on, please let him know how much you appreciate his efforts. He deserves our biggest thanks.

Name Withheld

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters of local interest to the community, and to/from officials. Requests for a *Name Withheld* signature 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*.

Submit letters by e-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com or on a disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. If you e-mail, expect a confirming response and, if you don’t receive one, *resend* and call **212-826-9056** to alert us that it’s been sent.

Alternatives: Typed copy left at 531 Main Street; allow extra time for type-setting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief. We are not able to take telephone dictation of letters.

All letters are subject to acceptance and editing for length and clarity. Recommended maximum length, 350 words; longer letters considered if their content merits the required space.



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December 9, 2009

1. **Board of Directors:** Meeting held Thursday, December 10, at 4:30 p.m., with a full agenda and a Town Hall following. No action from the State Senate yet on the nominations of Margie Smith, Dr. Kathie Grimm, and Mike Shinozaki.

2. **Tram:** On schedule for shutdown March 1 and reopening by September 1, 2010. Because of the difficulties in isolating costs associated with the mechanical overhaul of the system and its component parts, we have agreed with POMA that it should go ahead with its work, and when completed as indicated by the resumption of service, we will take stock of where we are and how much is left in the budget to address station improvements.

3. **Southpoint:**

(A) **Green Rooms/Wild Gardens:** Phase 1 essentially complete. Permitting and Request for Proposals (RFP) for phase 2 nearing final readiness to be performed in the spring.

(B) **FDR Memorial:** Legal work on City funding agreement continues with the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI) attorneys carrying the load. Oversight of

construction by RIOC will be necessary, so an RFP for that function was issued, with a dozen responses received. The expense will be borne by FERI. I expect construction to start in the spring. State Parks has not rescheduled the meeting to determine methodology for future maintenance, but continues to acknowledge responsibility, having developed the program and a budget. A \$2 million endowment has been received by State Parks.

4. **Projects:** Sportspark pool is reopened and fully operational, ADA- and code-compliant. A quick rededication is scheduled before Thursday's Board meeting. The gym floor is refinished and bleachers are on the way. Planning for mechanical system replacement, new weightlifting equipment, and other refurbishing is ongoing. The Island community should be proud of this facility and make use of it with increased swimming participation by the Marlins, the disabled community, seniors, open swim, etc. The Youth Center will have greater access for basketball and soccer, and adult leagues will have a place when the weather makes outdoor courts unplayable. The table tennis group is ever-expanding. Watch for program announcements.

The next big problem on the horizon is the status of the helix leading to the Island from the Roosevelt Island Bridge. It was last repaired almost 20 years ago. We are having an engineering inspection done to determine the condition and to program the needed repairs. Long-term wear and tear, with corrosion from salt in the winter, has taken its toll. Hopefully, there will not need to be complete rebuilding, with the attendant dislocation and cost, but the safety of the

Island's connection must be ensured.

5. **Ferry:** It appears that a temporary service is possible from the East Channel oil dock during the Tram outage, although usage and cost remain big questions. If all the morning rush-hour Tram commuters opt for ferry service to 35th Street and are willing to pay for a two-fare zone, with bus connection to other bus and subway lines, then it is projected as a breakeven. Less than such participation will require a subsidy, presumably from RIOC, estimated to be on the order of \$100,000 for the six months of the Tram shutdown. The New York City Economic Development Corporation is participating in the discussions, but has not yet agreed to take up any of the financial burden. Stay tuned.

6. **MTA:** At the behest of RIRA and the Island's elected officials, a meeting with the schedulers of the MTA was held on December 9 to discuss supplemental service during the Tram shutdown. [See article, page 1.] Good job even getting such a meeting!

7. **Public Purpose Fund:** Applications for the 2010-11 cycle should be submitted immediately. See RIOC's website or call Erica Wilder for assistance. Completed applications will be delivered to RIRA for its review and recommendations to the Board.

8. **Budget:** The 2010-11 budget is being assembled in draft and, as proposed, will be posted on RIOC's website for public review and comment and possible amendment before being formally presented to the Board for adoption at the March meeting. RIRA and other interested parties are welcome to review, comment, and raise questions as part of the process. We have tried to set forth the detail of the assumptions that are part of the exercise and have made the projections for 15 years, subject to the inevitable infirmities of far-off estimates. Both operating and capital budgets have been set forth.

9. **Blackwell Park:** Community participation in the planning process is seemingly back on track.

10. **Holidays:** The traditional Christmas Tree lighting was held on December 3 with a great turnout, delightful weather, and good cheer for all. Thank you, Santa, and all the supporters of this opportunity for the Island community to turn out and enjoy. The Menorah is to be lit and Kwanzaa to be celebrated. Good tidings, health, and happiness to everyone.

an acceptable level of risk for their operations. Once we have more data and analysis, maybe their perceptions and decision-making will change. I'll have more to report over the next month or so.

The MTA agreed to look into other items: at least one down escalator on the mezzanine level for Manhattan-bound trains; signage to spread people out on the platform (first train car is most crowded because of elevator placement here); reducing pigeon poop; faster direction change on upper escalators; better signage for arriving trains; more frequent Q102 service; single direction loop for Q102 route (i.e., no guessing whether the bus will leave the Island).

Roosevelt Island's transit modes and capacity:

- MTA Bus: 120-300 passengers/hour
- Water ferry (none at present): 120-350/hour
- Tramway: 1,000/hour
- Subway: Up to 20,000/hour

Clearly, improving subway service can produce the greatest benefit. Our proposal:

- Increase morning capacity by providing 4-5 rush-hour "specials" that extend Q service to Roosevelt Island – one train every half-hour between 6:30 and 9:00 a.m., perhaps at 6:50, 7:20, 7:50, 8:20, and 8:50.
- Special Q service that will take an uptown Q from the 57St-7Av terminus and send it outbound via 63rd Street tracks to 21St-Queensbridge. Once there, the motorman will switch to the west end of the train and wait while a Manhattan-bound F passes. The empty Q will then switch tracks and follow the F.
- Q will continue on the 63St tracks, stopping at 63St-Lex, then continue down 7Av and Bway as a normal Q.

This approach will add *no* load to the 63rd Street Connector interlock or the Rockefeller Center interlock, avoiding two congestion points. Islanders can transfer at 63rd-



Steve Shane, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
e-mail: SShane@RIOC.com

Good job even getting such a meeting!

Completed applications will be delivered to RIRA for its review and recommendations to the Board.

The 2010-11 budget is being assembled in draft and, as proposed, will be posted on RIOC's website for public review and comment and possible amendment before being formally presented to the Board for adoption at the March meeting. RIRA and other interested parties are welcome to review, comment, and raise questions as part of the process. We have tried to set forth the detail of the assumptions that are part of the exercise and have made the projections for 15 years, subject to the inevitable infirmities of far-off estimates. Both operating and capital budgets have been set forth.

Community participation in the planning process is seemingly back on track.

The traditional Christmas Tree lighting was held on December 3 with a great turnout, delightful weather, and good cheer for all. Thank you, Santa, and all the supporters of this opportunity for the Island community to turn out and enjoy. The Menorah is to be lit and Kwanzaa to be celebrated. Good tidings, health, and happiness to everyone.

Once we have more data and analysis, maybe their perceptions and decision-making will change. I'll have more to report over the next month or so.

The MTA agreed to look into other items: at least one down escalator on the mezzanine level for Manhattan-bound trains; signage to spread people out on the platform (first train car is most crowded because of elevator placement here); reducing pigeon poop; faster direction change on upper escalators; better signage for arriving trains; more frequent Q102 service; single direction loop for Q102 route (i.e., no guessing whether the bus will leave the Island).

Roosevelt Island's transit modes and capacity:

- MTA Bus: 120-300 passengers/hour
- Water ferry (none at present): 120-350/hour
- Tramway: 1,000/hour
- Subway: Up to 20,000/hour

Clearly, improving subway service can produce the greatest benefit. Our proposal:

- Increase morning capacity by providing 4-5 rush-hour "specials" that extend Q service to Roosevelt Island – one train every half-hour between 6:30 and 9:00 a.m., perhaps at 6:50, 7:20, 7:50, 8:20, and 8:50.

- Special Q service that will take an uptown Q from the 57St-7Av terminus and send it outbound via 63rd Street tracks to 21St-Queensbridge. Once there, the motorman will switch to the west end of the train and wait while a Manhattan-bound F passes. The empty Q will then switch tracks and follow the F.

- Q will continue on the 63St tracks, stopping at 63St-Lex, then continue down 7Av and Bway as a normal Q.

This approach will add *no* load to the 63rd Street Connector interlock or the Rockefeller Center interlock, avoiding two congestion points. Islanders can transfer at 63rd-

Islanders can transfer at 63rd-

Islanders can transfer at 63rd-

Islanders can transfer at 63rd-

A New Light on RIOC

OpEd by Assemblymember Micah Z. Kellner

A new law is set to make the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) – and every other public authority in New York State – more transparent and more accountable.

Our State's public authorities have been described as a "shadow government" – exerting enormous influence over New Yorkers' lives, while operating in obscurity. No one knows this better than Roosevelt Islanders, who must live with the consequences of decisions made by RIOC. The landmark Public Authorities Reform Act of 2009, which I co-sponsor and helped develop, will bring this shadow government into the light, vastly expanding public oversight and clearing up the fog that has surrounded authorities' finances and operations.

As Island residents know all too well, RIOC's role in developing and operating Roosevelt Island means that residents do not have meaningful recourse to the usual democratic mechanisms of community planning, like community boards and the zoning process. Roosevelt Island's elected officials and community leaders have worked hard to make RIOC more democratic and accountable. After years of effort, we now have a RIOC Board of Directors governed by a majority of Island residents who have been chosen by their fellow Islanders.

Our legislation will strengthen this Board, putting it in firmer control of RIOC and emphasizing its responsibility to the public. Board members will have an explicit fiduciary duty to the authority, and will be required to exercise direct oversight of senior management, as well as to keep closer tabs on its operations and finances, to adopt a code of ethics, and to protect whistle-blowers who report wrongdoing.

Under the new law, RIOC will also be subject to much stricter independent oversight. We have dramatically expanded the reach of the watchdog Authorities Budget Office (ABO), giving it the power to issue subpoenas, to act upon complaints from the public, to warn and censure public authorities over bad practices, and to suspend or even remove authority directors. All information provided to the ABO will be made public.

The new legislation also creates additional reporting requirements for public authorities, and gives the State Comptroller the power to pre-approve all no-bid or State-funded contracts over \$1 million.

A key provision will allow RIOC to rent out the currently vacant storefronts on Main Street. An authority will be permitted to lease its property at below-market value when doing so would be in keeping with its mission – which, for RIOC, includes ensuring that Main Street features the thriving retail businesses that Roosevelt Island needs. In fact, the main problem to date has simply been determining what the "fair market value" of the storefronts might be. Now that an appraisal of the storefronts has been completed, RIOC should have no further problems



Assemblymember
Micah Kellner

COMING UP

is not missing...
You'll find it on page 26, and other formatting changes have been made for this holiday issue.
The Senior Center schedule, too.

Lex, or continue on 7Av-Bway, or transfer to an F at Herald Square.

This extra service would be provided only for the morning rush; we're asking for no additional evening service.

This kind of cross-track routing has been done before, and the 21St-Queensbridge station was the old Q terminus, so it has the signaling required to support the turnaround and track changes.

If this plan is implemented, RIOC will cooperate, and coordinate the Red Bus schedule with the added trains.

2. **RIRA forms Blackwell Park subcommittee.** The Gang of 15 who have been investigating and advising on Blackwell Park have been organized under RIRA so that RIOC has official community input. Judy Berdy and Matt Katz are co-chairs.

I would like to respond to the comments of RIOC's Rosina Abramson in the last *WIRE* ("There seems to be great confusion in the community as to who speaks for the community, we had always assumed it was RIRA [the Roosevelt Island Residents Association], but there are other groups popping up."). Her statements are false and misleading. I've bitten my tongue on this topic for a while, but Abramson is continually factually challenged, which continues (for all of us) to diminish the level of trust in her. It is difficult for RIOC to lead an effort when the reporting of the facts is

See **RIRA Column**, page 16

The RIOC Column

1. **Wednesday's meeting with the MTA – progress, but no tangible results so far.** Paul Curtis from Assemblymember Kellner's office arranged for a meeting at the MTA concerning improved transportation during the Tram outage (March-September 2010). The meeting was attended by our reps (Kellner in person; offices of Lappin, Serrano, and Stringer), RIOC (Shane, Abramson, Wilder, Kalkin), and RIRA (myself and Matt Katz). Unfortunately, the press (Dick Lutz, *WIRE*; Rick O'Connor, Roosevelt Islander blog) were expelled from the meeting. We listened to an MTA presentation by Glenn Lunden and proposed our own solutions (see box below).

Briefly, according to the MTA, Roosevelt Island has plenty of available F-train capacity in the morning rush hours – so much capacity that the F train should be able to completely accommodate all the Tram passengers. Now, certainly, Roosevelt Island residents have a completely different experience: waiting for trains, trying to wedge into a crowded train. Our progress? I think we (all of us representing the Island) did a pretty credible job of explaining why our transportation situation is unique and why we need help from the MTA.

In response to an MTA staffer's comment, "You are no different than the Bedford Avenue station [in Williamsburg]," I explained that everywhere else, if the subway is transportation option A, then there are also options B and C with only a 15-minute commute penalty and with only a 5-10 minute variability. On Roosevelt Island, options B and C are a 45-60 minute commute penalty with a 30-minute variability, i.e., your daily commuting time increases by 1.5 to 2.5 hours. It was that kind of quantitative analysis that quickly made it clear to the MTA that Roosevelt Island is unique.

Overall, the thinking of the MTA staff is largely based on quantitative support. I have requested data (MTA says they will provide it), and plan to audit and challenge the MTA's numbers and methodology. For the MTA, their main concern about the plan we presented is that when the train switches directions, shutting down and starting up, the train might not start up and then it would block outgoing traffic. Again, I've requested data to see if our scenario is within

within

The RIRA Column

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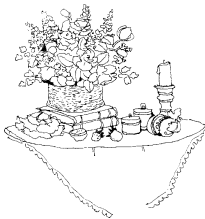


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Keller from page 3

Valley, and graduated from Bucknell University in 1972. While there, he became active in the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, which he served as a staff member. He received a Master of Divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in 1975, and a Doctor of Ministry from Westminster Theological Seminary in 1981. Upon graduation, Tim took a six-month interim appointment as pastor of a church in Hopewell, Virginia, where he stayed for nine years.

Tim and Kathy met at Bucknell, when she was visiting her sister. But it was later, when both were attending graduate school at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, that they fell in love and were married in their last semester.

Tim Keller’s path to his current church began when he was baptized as a Roman Catholic by his mother. But he was raised as a Lutheran – his father’s church. The family eventually joined the Evangelical Congregational (E.C.) Church, an offshoot of the Methodist Church with German roots.

While attending seminary, Tim came to a basic difference with the doctrines of the E.C. Church and found himself unable to sign the Statement of Faith, which asserts that it is possible for a person to achieve earthly perfection and sinlessness. The minister who married Tim and Kathy in their senior year at seminary pointed them toward the Presbyterian Church in America.

In 1989, that church asked him to form a new congregation in New York. The first service of the Redeemer Presbyterian Church was held at the Seventh Day Adventist church on East 85th Street, with 50 people in attendance. Today, its 5,000 members meet in three different locations in Manhattan: Hunter College Auditorium on the East Side, and the Ethical Culture Auditorium and the First Baptist Church on the West Side.

Dr. Keller describes the logistics of his church work as follows: “At this point, though the congregations are somewhat different in age and racial makeup, whoever preaches itinerates among all of them, so you have basically the same message. You have the same speakers at the three locations, so it seems pretty unified. On Sunday, there are five services. Currently, I preach four of the services and another preacher conducts the fifth. He preaches from the same text as I do, and we talk about it beforehand, so it is essentially the same sermon but it isn’t identical. Last Sunday, I preached the 9:15 on the West Side, then got a ride over to Hunter for the 10:30 service. Then, at night, I preached at 5:00 on the West Side and another service on the East Side. I am really an old-fashioned circuit rider.”

Redeemer has activities beyond the Sunday sermons. “We have a youth outreach program, but the two biggest activities consist of about 3,000 people who meet in small groups in apartments, usually once a week. They meet to study, learn, get to know one another, and support one another. Bible study is usually part of the discussion. It is really about getting to know one another and, essentially, about creating a family. In a city, most people are living away from their families, so you are creating a small family. The other thing that we do is volunteerism. We are involved with 35 or 40 programs designed to help people in need, anything from delivering meals to working with children to helping at homeless shelters.”

Dr. Keller’s followers represent a sub-section of Manhattan’s population. “Our parishioners tend to be young people living in Manhattan. Your target audience is who you live near. If we are a good neighbor, then I want to reach my neighbors. First, I say *Come on in and be part of our congregation*. If they do not choose to be a Christian, then I try to reach them in another way. We say, *How do we help make the city a better place to live? How do we support the flourishing of the whole city, whether you’re a Christian or not?*

“There are two ways to say *I love my neighbor*. One is to say *I love Christ who has meant so much to us*, and we invite you to participate in that. If you don’t, then we still want to add value to your life. So,



our target audience is the young professionals who live around where we work and we are 70% single.”

Tim is not unaware that some young people may be coming to his services simply to meet others their age. “Yes, certainly. I think in some people’s minds, that’s the original reason. In other people’s minds, it’s a supplemental benefit.”

When asked to define his message, Dr. Keller said, “It’s worth reflecting on. When I got here, many said my orthodox theology might not fit in a big-city environment. They said, it’s a secular society, you’re not going to get many people. What I don’t think they realized is that among younger people was a greater hunger, spiritually, than they thought. We don’t say, ‘Here’s the truth, love it or leave it.’ We try to make a case for it, give reasons to believe in it, and help people understand why it makes sense. We are not afraid of questions. We say, ‘Sure, what are your questions?’ And we try to answer them.”

Tim Keller is forthright in declaring his belief in the historical accuracy of the Bible. “I view the Bible in terms of what each writer meant. If Luke said, ‘Jesus rose from the dead, the stone was rolled away, and he left; and you know Luke meant for us to believe that as an historical fact, then I take that as Luke meant me to take it. If you say, ‘I like to think of it as a wonderful parable,’ well, that’s not taking it literally. On the other hand, there are plenty of places in the Bible that are poetry, like Psalms. I’m not supposed to take Psalms literally because the author doesn’t want me to. However, I take the Bible literally by what most people mean by that. It’s not to be taken metaphorically, and that’s part of what orthodoxy is. We would take the story of Jonah being swallowed by a large fish quite seriously. The Bible doesn’t say that the sun stopped so the Israelites could win the battle. It says that God gave them longer daylight. That is an historical narrative, not poetry, and is to be taken literally. I believe that happened on that day.

Morrit from page 3

tory of Judaism vis-a-vis Christianity. “I was lucky enough to discover the Jewish Sabbath as an adult.”

When she graduated, she greatly wanted to attend college in New York City, but her father considered the City too dangerous for a young girl on her own. As a compromise, she attended Harlaxton College near Grantham, England. She welcomed the opportunity to travel and meet students from other countries. She was intrigued by people from other cultures, how they think and how they act.

After two years, she transferred to New York University, where she was safely ensconced in a dormitory. She was in the Gallatin Division, where students are allowed to create their own major field of study. Determined to find work in the music industry, she designed her program of courses toward that end. Upon graduation, she took an entry-level position with Arista Records. Working her way up the corporate ladder, she eventually became Director of Production, a high-level job that came with a correspondingly high income. Along the way, she met an attorney in the company’s legal office. He became her husband. They moved to Tenafly, New Jersey, with the arrival of children.

During the maternity leave after her first son was born, Leana began to think more about religious questions and what it means to be a Jew. She enrolled in a 30-week course at the 92nd Street Y, exploring Judaism for adults. As she puts it, “Ju-

“The crossing of the Red Sea is an historical narrative. Did God wave his hand like Cecil B. DeMille, or did something happen upstream, an earthquake or some natural event? We’re not told. We don’t know if God did it through a direct miracle or if He did it through some other means. But we know the historical effect.

“Plenty of Protestant preachers in New York would say that is a nice legend, created by a primitive people, but we don’t believe it today. But I do believe it and that is part of my orthodoxy.”

Keller has given considerable thought to the future of his church. “At 58, it’s clear to me that my job for the next 10 years or so is to train a new generation of leaders, both pastors and lay leaders, to move Redeemer forward in the future without me – to keep it true to its original basic vision and to do it in new ways that new generations need it to be done. I’m not looking for just one successor to take the job. I believe the church is large enough and diverse enough that it needs to become a network of churches with a number of pastors. I’m not going to try to tell God what to do. We’ll just wait and see what develops.”

What Keller did not reveal was his secret for time management that has allowed him to manage the affairs of his church, write three books with another on the way, publish numerous articles in religious and other journals, and travel extensively, spreading his message of the Gospels. The *New York Times* reports that “pastors from all over the world are beginning to come in a steady stream to New York City to glean what they can from Dr. Keller and Redeemer.”

According to *Christianity Today*, Redeemer is “one of Manhattan’s most vital congregations,” and in a 2006 survey of 2,000 American church leaders is the sixteenth

Briefly...

From Thursday’s RIOC Board meeting:

• RIOC has engaged Jones Lang LaSalle to help with negotiations surrounding possible privatization of **Rivercross** and development of a tenant-ownership plan at **Island House** (and, very likely, **Westview**). The key component will be the ground-lease extensions, considered necessary for long-term planning and for mortgage viability. Plans acceptable to DHCR will include provisions for long-term affordability, according to RIOC President Steve Shane, who spoke Thursday evening at a meeting of the RIOC Board of Directors. Jones Lang will also help RIOC’s real-estate advisory committee in the struggle to get Main Street storefronts rented.

• RIOC is prepared to subsidize **ferry service** during the March-to-September Tramway outage, if loading is feasible at the old oil dock east of the Tram station. Shane said that New York Waterways’ business plan for the service calls for break-even if all the present Tram ridership transfers to the ferry, which he doesn’t expect will happen.

daism is meant for adults. It provides answers to the big questions that we all have to face at one time or another – such as how to make best use of the gift that is our lives.”

Leana says, “I took the class thinking that if the religion was good enough for my parents to reject it, then it was good enough for me to reject it. I could then reject it with integrity.” Instead, Leana “got bitten by the Torah bug” and began a process of self-study, including learning Hebrew at a nearby synagogue. She also began to study conversational Hebrew. After the second of her three children was born, she stopped working at Arista and began doing a lot of volunteer and community work, and got serious about Judaism. To immerse herself in Jewish history and culture, she took her children, ages four, six and nine, to Israel for a summer of study and exploration. “Then I began graduate study at the seminary and immersed myself in serious Judaic text study.”

Upon returning from Israel, Leana enrolled in the Academy for Jewish Religion in Riverdale. Most of the students at the seminary were professional people embarked on a second career to become rabbis. It was the first pluralistic Jewish seminary, in that it did not attach itself to any of the various movements within the Jewish religion. As she explains it, “We are proudly pluralistic. On Roosevelt Island, we try to draw upon what was best and most meaningful from all parts of Judaism.”

It took Leana nine years of full- and part-time study to become ordained as a rabbi. During this period, she and her husband agreed to an amicable separation and divorce.

In Leana’s last year at the seminary, she was recommended to the Jewish congregation on Roosevelt Island, which was looking to replace its rabbi. She was one of four applicants. Steve Kaufman, a member of the congregation’s selection committee, says, “Leana’s interview was way beyond any of the others. We could see she was a good people-person and that she would be a good fit with our congregation.”

Steve might also have said that Leana’s sense of humor was a big plus in her selection. When an interviewer set the stage at the outset by declaring himself a non-Jew, Leana’s instant reply was, “Would you like to be?” accompanied by an impish smile.

Although not affiliated with any particular branch of Judaism, Leana points out that “We all have the same prayers, study the same Torah, worship the same God. If you walked into our congregation, you would say we were somewhere between a Liberal-Conservative synagogue. As is customary in Conservative and Reformed synagogues, I wear a prayer shawl, as do the women in the congregation. Regarding the prayers traditionally

reserved for those of priestly descent in more strictly traditional communities, here anyone can say the prayers.”

To Leana, being a Jew carries certain obligations. “On the High Holidays, we study about our responsibilities to a greater society, especially



in medical care. What’s our role in supporting that in a society?”

Asked to contrast Judaism with Christianity, Leana said, “The afterlife is not the focus of Judaism. The focus is this life, this world. What progress can we make as God’s partners in perfecting and healing the world? We have a heaven and everybody gets there. Some people take a little longer than others. Different people believe different things, and nobody can tell you what to believe. One thing we don’t have is eternal damnation, and we don’t have a devil, or any independent deity in any competition with God.”

Since the Roosevelt Island Jewish congregation is not large enough to support a full-time rabbi, Leana also teaches a course at the 92nd Street Y as an introduction to Judaism for adults. She served as Director of the Jewish Outreach program at the Y until last spring, and is currently on its teaching staff. Not content with those duties, Leana created “Threshold”, a Jewish life education and interfaith counseling service. In that capacity, she teaches classes and workshops for adults exploring conversion and also in interfaith relationships. In addition, Leana does individual religious and spiritual counseling when required. “Right now, I’m conducting an interfaith grandparents workshop. I do couples counseling and of course there are weddings, funerals, that sort of thing.” Leana’s overall approach is to help people find how Judaism fits into their lives and families. In what might be an instance of divine coincidence, Leana points out that, in Hebrew, ‘Lean’ means ‘where to’ and the (Hebrew equivalent of the) letter A represents God. Her name is therefore translated as, Where to God? Leana Moritt’s life is now devoted to helping herself and others find answers to that question.

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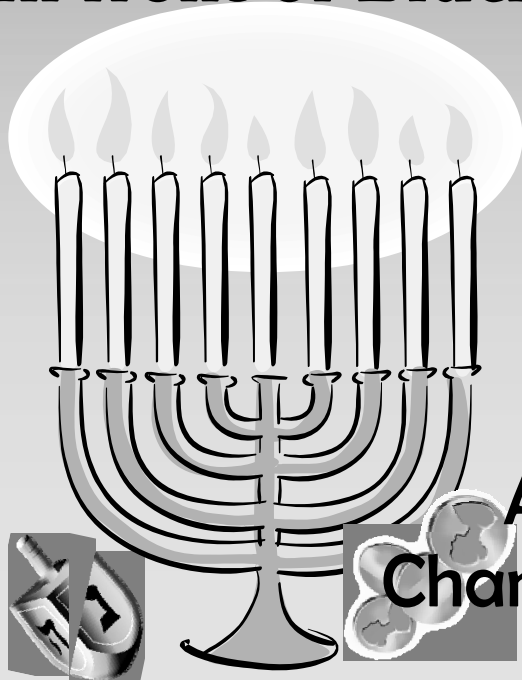
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- Friday, January 8 at 4:27 pm

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Orphans from page 3

review of the organization and how we would best pursue our mission, that we could do that best by being independent of Jim, focusing on getting as much help as we can to our children.” (DeKoker is the director of development for a health-care non-profit.)

In another bullet point in its letter, OIA/BFI says, “We are proud to announce that Starlene Johnson, MPA, has joined the organization as Executive Director,” identifying her as “a former [OIA] board member with a background in nonprofit consulting and finance.”

Johnson, answering the question of why Luce was told in a letter that he must “cease and desist from engaging in any further activities on behalf of Orphans International America,” uses language similar to DeKoker’s: “Jim is focusing on other projects. It just seemed the best thing. We made clear that the money needs to go to the kids in the future, and he felt that wasn’t something he could work with.”

Luce doesn’t see it that way – not at all. Attempting to summarize his views in a sentence or two is problematic, but it’s safe to say he would characterize the “hostile takeover” as a highjacking, by young Wall Street types, of the charitable organization that he started with personal hard work, some good fortune, a flow of funding stimulated through personal contacts, money that was inherited from his mother, a memorial fund for his brother, and his own contributions of 401K cash. He estimates those personal financial contributions at about \$250,000.

Ironically, the current board was recruited and embraced by Jim Luce himself.

In addition to DeKoker, the board includes Vice President Nancy Zhang, Secretary Alastair Bushby, and a Roosevelt Islander, Treasurer Kimberly Andino. Starlene Johnson left the board when she assumed the duties of executive director.

“I needed to recruit a dynamic professional team to help the organization move to its next level,” Luce writes in a draft article about the current crisis. He explains that the new board members had been part of a United Way effort to involve young professionals in its activities. He says they came to him after becoming frustrated with the United Way’s inability to be light on its feet, seemingly bound up in rules, regulations, and traditions that meant that good ideas couldn’t be acted upon without multiple levels of bureaucratic clearance. To make way for the new board, Luce led an exodus of the existing OIA board members to an emeritus board. In his article, he says, “I knew when I left the board of OI America that there was a possibility – however slight – that this group might take over. But I wanted the U.S. portion of our organization to grow, and I convinced myself that they had the professional acumen to grow it.”

Speaking of Starlene Johnson, Luce says, “She was quite pleased that we had a 10-year track record where everything was positive, [because] you can’t really begin a new entity and go out and get major funding – foundation funding – unless and until you spend three or four years developing it.”

Luce says he had seen a need for new blood – and young blood – on OI’s board of directors. “It seemed like a perfect fit,” he said on the day before Thanksgiving, discussing the board’s action with this reporter. At that point, only a few people knew what had happened, and Luce was considering ways to resolve his differences with the board that had separated him from the organization he founded.

They had taken his name off bank accounts, taken control of the Orphans International website (through which some funds are raised), and denied him access to e-mail sent to OI. Even so, he was asking, rhetorically, “Is the glass half empty or half full?” With pro bono lawyers, he was working to reclaim control of the OI website and e-mail system. He had notified the OIA board that the umbrella organization, OI Worldwide, had decertified OIA as of Monday, November 16. An attorney’s letter said they could no longer use the *Orphans International* name or logo.

Then, on the day after Thanksgiving, the letter from Better Future International arrived in donor mailboxes, announcing Luce’s separation as the last bullet point in a set of six. With the matter now in the open, Luce felt the need to communicate with donors. While the letter made no accusation against him, people started asking the kind of questions that naturally arise when someone is fired, more or less, in public.

“I was annoyed,” Luce said, then explained that his “annoyed” is probably the equivalent of someone else’s “terribly angry.”

DeKoker and Johnson say that the board’s decision to change OIA’s name to “Better Future International” was not a response to the letter from OIWW attorneys forbidding them to use the Orphans International name, with DeKoker explaining, “We felt that in light of our refined focus that the new name constituted what we are really going after and it kind of speaks about what we want to provide for these children.”

Luce says that his legal advisors have established that the



“Orphans International” name and logo are his personal intellectual property.

Luce, in the draft article, comments, “I still believe, in general, that people are good. But little people who wish to [appear] great off the achievements of others are a bane. I did not avoid them, thus placing my orphaned children in harm’s way, for which I am particularly remorseful.”

Motives

What would bring the board that Luce recruited to separate Luce from the organization? Getting at that question is difficult in a circumstance where board members are carefully avoiding statements that might be judged as slanderous accusations or, once in print, actionable libel. Getting at the details of that question and discovering any substantive reason for separating the organization – or at least the OIA part of it – from its founder is a task that would require investigative authority unavailable to *The WIRE*, which can’t subpoena records or require witnesses to swear to tell the truth on penalty of perjury.

One hint at a source of concern is contained in a draft report by the certified public accountants N. Cheng & Co., which contains these phrases:

- “...we identified certain deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be significant...”
- These “adversely affect OIA’s ability to initiate, authorize, record, process, or report financial data reliably... such that there is more than a remote likelihood that

a misstatement of OIA’s financial statements that is more than inconsequential will not be prevented or detected...”

In a series of “findings,” the CPA firm identified “a lack of segregation of duties within the cash receipts area. ... Certain duties involving receipts should be handled by more than one member of OIA’s personnel.” It suggests that a debit card with a \$600/day limit be “discontinued as such transactions are not properly documented in most instances and not systematically recorded on the book.” Another finding: “Files documenting all of OIA’s contributions were not maintained.”

These comments apply to “the year ended December 31, 2006,” but the draft letter is dated almost two years later – September 9, 2008. Luce admits that, under his leadership, OI fell seriously behind in maintaining financial records and making required government filings, but he says he welcomed DeKoker and Johnson and the other new members aboard in January 2008 specifically to deal with that, turned the financial records over to them, and provided a punch-list of what had to be done.

Just before that, according to Luce, financial record-keeping had been done by volunteers from mid-2007 to early 2008, and after January 2008 by unpaid interns supervised by Linda Stanley, who had taken on the role of executive director.

With regard to the CPA’s concerns, Luce says that the documentation for all transactions exists, but probably needs to be explained. But the records are now held by Starlene Johnson, who told *The WIRE* that she has them in her apartment. “I’ve offered to meet with them to go over things,” says Luce. “They haven’t asked.”

On Monday, Luce offered an explanation for the handling of OI cash. He said that there were times when the flow of funds to OI projects fell behind the need at the projects, and

that led to cash withdrawals. “When they call and say the kids are starving – that they don’t have funds to buy food – there’s an immediate need and the fast way to get funds to them is to withdraw cash and go to Western Union to wire it to them.” Asked how often this happened and in what amounts, Luce said it was a consistent pattern back around 2006 and that the total would be substantial. “The bank accounts for Haiti and Indonesia were always flat,” he said. “Money in, money out. Across Haiti, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, we were routinely six months behind in cash flow. We would send funds as they became available. This was the number one discussion at all monthly board meetings.”

Luce says all cash withdrawals and transmissions were fully documented, though Rivercross resident Doris Chernik, who has assumed responsibility for the OI project in Haiti, says that she thinks there were times when a receiving project may have failed to provide a receipt for transmitted funds.

Asked about the schism between Luce and the OIA board, Chernik says she wants to stay neutral, but is leaning toward the board rather than Luce. Since a trip last month to the project in Haiti (related article, next page), Chernik says she has been in touch with Luce on routine matters, but not to discuss the troubles between him and the board.

At some point, the fundraising and fund management for the Haiti project was separated from Orphans International as a whole, at Chernik’s request and with Luce’s agreement. The same was true of the Sri Lanka project, for which a New Jersey resident has assumed major responsibility; that project insisted on separated finances at some point.

Luce explains that, earlier, all OI funding had been kept in “one pot” with funds doled out, as needed, to the international projects, but that the goal had always been to establish separate accounts. When the Sri Lanka project insisted on having its own specific account with some \$80,000 in it, Luce and another Islander, Ethel Romm, co-signed for a loan at New York National Bank. Luce says that loan and several others remain outstanding. DeKoker says the board is not aware of such loans.

Linda Stanley, a Chicago resident who lived on Roosevelt Island for a time and volunteered as OI executive director from 2008 to August, 2009, says she feels that “the board is doing the right thing.” She says she was told by the auditing firm that there were cash withdrawals without supporting receipts, but she immediately cautions against drawing any conclusion – particularly, any accusation – from that information. “I am making no allegation.” But she further explains that, because there are filings that must be completed to satisfy state and federal regulations governing nonprofit organizations, the failure to keep records current has become a liability to OI.



Report from Orphans International Haiti

by Doris Chernik
Haiti Coordinator for OIWW

While such fines are sometimes forgiven for non-profits, missing and late filings can attract unwanted attention from tax authorities – a serious difficulty if records are incomplete or sketchy. Luce agrees that delayed filings are a problem, and says that various fines, possibly in the tens of thousands of dollars, are accumulating. But he says that when he brought on the current board in January 2008, he immediately briefed them on what had to be done to clean up the organization’s paperwork. He says that paperwork got short shrift starting in mid-2007 because a bookkeeper and accountant – a husband and wife living on the Island – resigned and could not immediately be replaced. It was then, Luce says, that the job of bringing financial records up to date and completing the missing government filings was given to volunteers, and then to the interns recruited and managed by Linda Stanley. “I saw them making entries” in the OI office on Main Street (in the former Montauk Credit Union storefront), Luce said on Monday. “But I don’t know where the records are.”

Situation

What emerges in listening to DeKoker, Johnson, Luce, and Stanley is a portrait of an organization founded by a man who responded to a great need and brought great enthusiasm and fundraising ability to bear, but may have slighted the formalities of careful record-keeping and strict procedure in favor of acting decisively on behalf of needy orphans. Further, Orphans International looks like an organization that took on so much – with affiliates in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Haiti, Tanzania, the Dominican Republic, and more in prospect – that it is in need of a transition to the level of professionalism that a paid staff can bring to bear.

Luce agrees with the board that a transition to a paid staff of specialists is called for, but he says he became alarmed when the board wanted to start with a Manhattan office and staff that, he said, would take the kind of money that could, instead, support one or more projects in third-world nations. He favored a slow and careful transition, and his descriptions suggest that he sees the board as moving too rashly toward what could become a substantial commitment to overhead costs.

As for paying a staff, DeKoker says that Executive Director Starlene Johnson has agreed to serve for a year with no pay. (Luce himself received \$42,000 a year, but only for about a year and a half, after which contributions were inadequate to pay the salary he had identified as “room and board subsistence” for him and his son.)

In a December 1 letter to past OI donors, Luce wrote, “I am writing to let you know that sadly we have been forced to decertify Orphans International America, whose new board has been forced to change its name and operate under another name.”

Luce says he is deeply concerned that, with the OIA board having separated from him, annual fundraising efforts may have stalled. At least some traditional OI events for this time of year are not happening, as far as he knows.

His letter continues, “OI America was one of several ‘donor’ nations raising funds for OI’s ‘project’ nations Haiti, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, etc. I had relinquished control of OIA last January so I could focus more fully on developing OI Worldwide, the umbrella organization for all OI projects. We had considered basing OIWW in Geneva or Monaco, but in the end have decided to remain here in New York. The 2009 OIA Board, under the leadership of Kristie DeKoker, and Director Starlene Johnson, tried to take over OI Worldwide this fall, demanding to take over OIWW’s board. They even seized OIWW’s e-mail server and website, which they took down.

“OIWW also had deep concerns about their failure to provide adequate business records, including financial reports. Instead of working with us to solve these issues, they simply tried to take over OIWW. We had to make the tough decision to cut off the limb [OIA] to save the body [OIWW].”

Luce continues, “I did not contribute my share of my mother’s estate, nor set up memorial funds for my brother and father, nor leave Wall Street or give away my own savings and 401-K, to have the organization I have built to help the children I have come to know and love destroyed in a hostile takeover.”

But Starlene Johnson, writing in a Monday night e-mail (and not directly responding to those remarks by Luce) says, “Despite being disgusted by the situation, the board made every effort to try and allow this situation to be resolved discreetly... We did not seek publicity. We did not seek to defame others... Each of us reached our current position with Jim’s blessing. Each of us finds the current situation extremely unfortunate and it was with heavy heart that we made the decision to separate from Jim Luce and OIWW. We, however, find it even more unfortunate that we were put in a situation to have to make such a decision.”

Johnson points out that, “Every person on this board and I could have turned our back on the problem and walked away... To walk away certainly would have been easier, and yet we haven’t.”

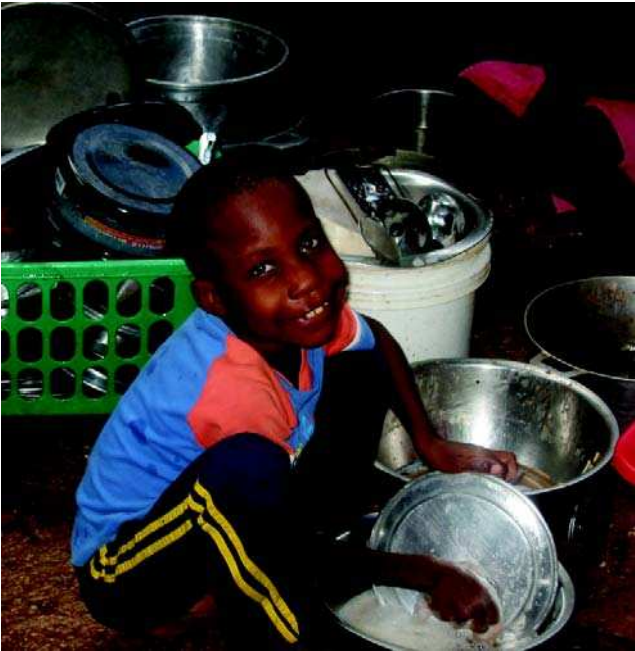
Johnson says, “We are limited in what we are allowed to say to defend ourselves... limited in what we can say publicly about the separation and its reasons.” She goes on to write that, prior to Linda Stanley’s August departure from Roosevelt Island, she came to Roosevelt Island to work with Linda and “quickly learned that the organization was in worse financial condition than had previously been reported to me or the board. Every country staff was past-due on pay by several months. Programs were receiving minimal

I just returned from my annual visit to Haiti. This was before the split between the Orphans International America (OIA) board and Orphans International Worldwide (OIWW) founder Jim Luce.

The Haiti orphans are truly wonderful, happy, healthy, and respectful of their houseparents. Although there have been a few tiffs, Haitian Director Jacques Africot tells me these were handled nicely... just like any normal family.

This was a very special visit because I had hoped that Orphans International (OI) would expand the present orphan program into a Family Care Center. I went specifically to see whether I could find facilities, medical care, and teaching staff that we could afford. I spent a week meeting with many local leaders; supporting a five-year lease of extensive banana fields; and meeting with agronomists, religious and secular leaders, and educators to discuss our proposed program.

OIA currently has a Family Care Program in three countries: Tanzania, Sri Lanka, and the Dominican Republic. With Family Care, one can reach more orphans, work with families, and, altogether, have a greater impact on the community. For Haiti, this means we would still focus on true orphans (mother died and father unavailable), but once we identify an orphan, we will search for someone within the



funding.” She asserts that Luce ignored her requests for information on finances.

Luce claims the opposite – that he has offered to explain the complications of OI record-keeping and finances, and to respond to specific questions about cash withdrawals. He says that instead of taking up that offer, the OIA board gave him the “cease and desist” letter on November 5.

Status

As things stand today, OIWW – the “world-wide” Orphans International that Luce says was always intended to be the umbrella organization – is moving toward incorporation as a 501(c)(3) non-profit entity, and has severed ties with OIA, the “donor nation” unit based here that became an incorporated 501(c)(3) in 2001 or 2002, and with OI Tanzania, which apparently has aligned itself with Orphans International America/Better Future International.

Luce says that he has told the heads of OI units in project nations that they should accept financial help from any source that offers it, including OIA/BFI. But he says that decertification will follow for any that changes its name from Orphans International to Better Future International.

Full disclosure: With other Islanders, this reporter contributes support for an orphan in OI’s Haiti project. Also, some years ago, I co-emceed an event for OI. In addition, Luce has written about *The WIRE* for the online *Huffington Post*, and has named an orphan dwelling house in Indonesia for this reporter’s late mother.



extended family (grandparents, aunt, uncle, cousins, siblings, etc.) to care for the orphan child. If the selected family doesn’t have the financial means to support the child, then we will provide money for food as well as handle all educational expenses, including uniforms, books, and fees. In addition, these orphaned children, as well as siblings within the new family and our own 11 orphaned children, will receive after-school training in computers, math, French, English, and sports, as well as being introduced to active debates and discussions, something sadly missing in many underdeveloped countries.

This past July, I visited the OIA Salama Family Care program in Tanzania. I was immensely impressed. It had been in effect only six months, but already it had produced a close bond between the surrogate families and the many children. During my visit, the surrogate mothers attended a discussion on “Alternative methods of punishment.” Twenty of the 22 mothers attended the class and actively participated in the discussions. And they have asked for more such discussions!

In addition, the families are encouraged to come to the center with their problems. The mothers have established friendships among the other families, work in the community garden, and help with cooking and teaching at the center. Tanzania doesn’t have a history of volunteerism, yet the mothers happily volunteer to do whatever is needed at the center. One of the surrogate fathers teaches computers on a daily basis as a volunteer. The Tanzanian families even organized a fundraising event for the Salama Family Care Center; one of the fathers performed magic tricks at the event.

In my opinion, the Family Care Program provides an excellent vehicle or beginning for groups to band together to take responsibility for improving their own community. In Haiti, we are currently exploring the possibility of using a local church for our after-school educational activities. The prominent people within the community, including several local pastors, are very excited about these plans. We will also provide “green” organic farming classes and individual family plots in our banana fields, so that the families can expand on their home meals. Our children will also participate by working as volunteers in the Konpay Organic Farm close by.

Orphans International has been promised a substantial grant from the Monaco Red Cross, to be paid once the Family Care program is in effect. However, OI must make sure there is sufficient money to get started before the grant will take effect.

If you would like to make a contribution for Haiti at this time, I suggest that you write a check to “Orphans International America” and in the memo section of the check indicate “Haiti.” You can send these checks c/o Doris Chernik at 531 Main St. #1013, NYC10044. I will immediately pass all checks to the Haiti account at the City National Bank of New Jersey, Harlem branch, and they, in turn, will transfer the funds to Jacques Africot at the Fonkoze Haiti bank. You can call me at **212-751-9577** with any questions.



Two Words to the Wise: Renter’s Insurance

by Ronald Gift Mullins

What if a volcano erupts in Jersey and fills your apartment with ash? Or a guest slips in your kitchen and injures his back? Or a thief sneaks into your apartment and gets away with most of your electronic equipment? Who would pay to clean up the ash, for the loss of equipment, for the medical expenses of your guest? No matter whether you’re living on Roosevelt Island in a rental unit, a co-op, or a condo, unless you had renter’s insurance, *you* would be financially responsible.

The owners of the rental units and the co-op and condo associations on Roosevelt Island have property and liability insurance on their buildings and environs. And specific structural parts of apartments in a co-op or condo may be covered by a master policy. These circumstances can be determined by reading your association’s bylaws and/or proprietary lease, and talking to board members. But that insurance policy would not respond to residents’ personal property or liability claims. To protect their personal property, residents would have to purchase a separate renter’s insurance policy.

Named Perils

Perils that are covered in a renter’s policy are specifically named. According to the New York State Department of Insurance, these named perils include fire or lightning; wind-storm or hail; explosion, cash, riot, or civil commotion; damage caused by aircraft; carnage caused by vehicles; smoke; vandalism or malicious mischief; theft; volcanic eruption; falling objects; weight of ice, snow, or sleet; accidental discharge or overflow of water or steam from within a plumbing, heating, air conditioning, or automatic fire-protective sprinkler system, or from a household appliance and others.

If it’s included in your policy, you can be protected for off-premises theft as well. This coverage would respond if your car or a hotel room where you were staying were broken into and your suitcase, briefcase, wallet, or other valuables were taken.

Your renter’s policy will also reimburse you for increases in living expenses that you have to pay when your apart-

ment becomes uninhabitable because of damage caused by one of the covered perils. However, only the difference between your normal living expenses and any additional living expenses will be reimbursed. Examples include bills for hotels, restaurants, transportation, telephone, etc.

Your coverage will also include liability protection, which covers injury to another person on your property. If necessary, your policy may even pay limited legal costs in some circumstances. Additionally, your policy will include a certain amount for medical expenses (usually \$500 to \$1,000) of people who don’t live with you, but who are injured on your property.

Taking Inventory

Before deciding how much renter’s insurance to buy, you must assess the value of your personal property. This can be time-consuming, but the more precise you are in inventorying and pricing your property, the better idea you will have about how much insurance to buy. Your inventory should list substantial items – laptops, desktops, computer

accessories, cellular phones, stereo systems, VCRs/DVD players, TV sets, CDs, DVDs, video games, cameras and other photography equipment, movable appliances including microwave ovens, furniture, sports equipment, china and glassware, clothing, and books. Record the value and the serial number of appropriate items. Photograph or videotape each room, including closets and open drawers.

Some insurance companies (see www.statefarm.com/_pdf/home_inventory_checklist.pdf) have free forms that you can use to create a room-by-room inventory of your personal possessions and their total cost. Keep the records, photos, videos, and receipts for major items in a fireproof place. Once you have a good idea of the value of your personal belongings, your next step is deciding how much coverage you need and can reasonably afford.

Factors Influencing Premium

The premium (the amount you pay to the insurance company for the policy) depends on a number of factors – where you live, your deductible, materials used in the construction of your building, your insurance company, and whether you need any additional coverage.

That fact that Roosevelt Island is about a mile from a fire station lessens the risk from fire destroying an apartment or building. Be sure you advise the insurance company agent that the firehouse is close and that alarms are nearby. This will help reduce the premium a bit.

Increasing your deductible (the amount you pay before your coverage kicks in when you have a loss) is another strategy. Some insurers start with a \$100 deductible. Others offer \$500 or higher. The lower your deductible the higher will be your premium. Just make sure you can afford the premium for whatever deductible you choose.

The residential buildings on Roosevelt Island are constructed of poured concrete and brick/stone. For that reason, they are unlikely to be destroyed by fire, and this reduces the risk, of loss to the insurance company, which lowers the renter’s insurance premium.

Some insurers offer discounts to policyholders who are over age 55 and retired. If you buy both auto and renter’s policies from the same insurance company, you may be given a discount. Most insurers also offer a discount for “protective devices,” including smoke and fire detectors, burglar alarms, and fire extinguishers.

If you’re thinking about getting a dog, you might want to reconsider. A growing number of insurance companies are reluctant to write renter’s policies for owners of certain breeds. Forgetting to disclose that you have a dog on the insurance application may lead to denial of your claim if you should have one involving your dog.

Cash Value vs Replacement Cost

When you are ready to complete an application for renter’s insurance, insurance companies may offer “actual cash value” (ACV) or “replacement cost coverage” for your belongings. ACV coverage pays only for what your property was worth *at the time* it was damaged or stolen. So, if you bought a TV set five years ago for \$700, it would be worth significantly less today. While you’d still need to spend \$700 or more for a new TV, your insurance company will pay only for what the old one was worth at the time it was destroyed or stolen, minus your deductible.

Replacement cost coverage, on the other hand, will pay what it actually costs to replace the items you lost, again minus the deductible. Most insurers write ACV coverage, but if you request it, they’ll quote you replacement cost coverage. Replacement cost coverage will be more expensive, anywhere from 10% to 20% above ACV, but it will also pay out more if you ever file a claim.

Special Conditions

Coverage for valuable jewelry, antiques, and electronics are usually covered only up to a specified amount in a standard renter’s policy. If you have items that are unusually expensive, such as a diamond ring, you’ll probably want to purchase a separate rider. Without riders for expensive items, you can’t recover the full loss if it’s beyond your policy limit. Laptops and desktops are covered up to a set amount. If your system is high-tech and costly, and for other-than-personal use, you will need to have a separate policy.

There are more than 50 insurance companies selling renter’s insurance in New York State. Though the rates are out of date by more than two and a half years, you can get a broad view of how much premiums vary from company to company by clicking on the Department of Insurance website (www.ins.state.ny.us/homeown/pdf/home2007.pdf) and going to page 33. The rates for rental, co-op, and condo insurance vary somewhat by insurance company. Each one uses slightly different underwriting criteria, which determine the final premium. It is to your advantage to compare prices. With many insurance companies having their own website with tenant insurance forms, it is possible in a few hours to have several quotes for your policy, tailored to your requirements and budget.

Insurance provides protection against unforeseeable circumstances. While you may be comfortable believing that *nothing can happen to me and my apartment*, you can have peace of mind for very little per month. Then, when the unforeseen happens, you’ll have something to start with.



November 30 fire gutted the apartment of Sisters Barbara Leonardo and M.T. Peterson, left. Inset: Firefighters assess damage once the fire is out



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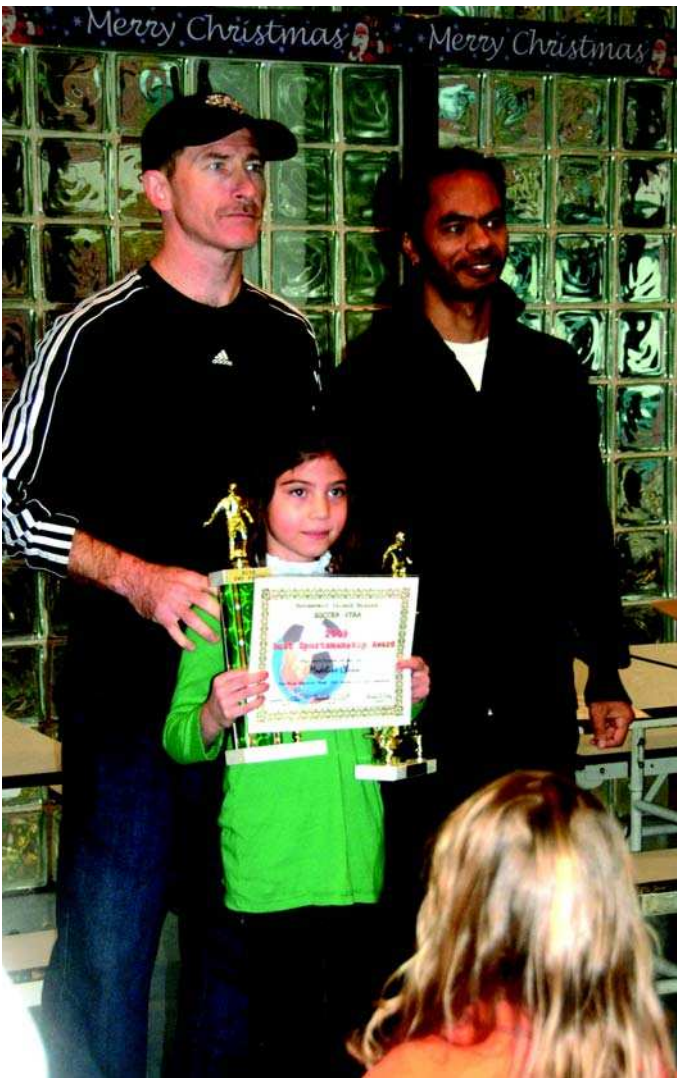
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"Maddy" Chen – Best Sportsmanship Award

RIRA Column from page 7

regularly inconsistent or incomplete. Good luck to Berdy and Katz – they are doing well listening to the community's needs.

3. **RIOC budgeting.** According to RIOC CFO Steve Chironis, this year's RIOC budget will include forecasts for 15 years rather than the State's mandate of five years. This is very helpful. Thanks, Steve, for addressing this concern from the residents.

4. **Great athletes from the Youth Program.** The soccer championship (Red vs. Turquoise) of 7-8-year-olds had 20 kids playing 2+ hours straight in Saturday's continuous cold, pouring rain. They were tied at 0-0. Two overtimes later, still tied and no score. Two sets of penalty kicks and tied at 1-1. Coaches, parents, and players all agreed that it was a tie and the teams would be co-champions. I couldn't believe the stamina and energy of the kids. Great job kids, coaches, and the Youth Program. (See photos, left and right.)

5. **Fire in Island House.** There was a fire in 551 Main Street (see article and photographs, page 14). We heard several complaints afterward about the performance of FDNY afterwards. I spoke with Lt. Philips at Engine 260, our nearest firehouse. The discussion was in the spirit of comparing notes and lessons learned. Overall, there's a little bit of improvement everywhere: FDNY, RIOC, Public Safety, managing agents, and residents themselves. RIRA will be compiling an informative list for an upcoming Town Hall meeting.

In church on Sunday, Fr. Miqueli asked residents to avoid idle gossip. There were no candles or electric blankets to cause a fire in the nuns' apartment. He suggested that we await the fire marshal's report to understand the cause of the fire. On Monday, a half-dozen of us helped pack things up while the apartment is being repaired.

Here's a fire-safety tip, especially applicable on Roosevelt Island. Many baseboard heaters have no guard, so power/electric cords can slip up into the heating elements and cause a fire. In my apartment, the heater configuration makes it impossible to have a bed in a bedroom that doesn't abut a heater. (For me, those heaters are *always* off.) Please be careful and regularly check sofas, beds, cables, etc., to make sure they are well clear of baseboard heaters.



"DJ" Smith, Red team MVP



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In 1969-1971, as Great Change Was Coming...

by Janet Falk

Susan Vlamis photographed Roosevelt Island before it became the Roosevelt Island we know today. Her work from those days has become the kick-off event for a celebration marking the 40th anniversary of the agreement between New York City and New York State for the residential development of Welfare Island.

An opening reception for the exhibit, in the Octagon Gallery at 888 Main Street, will take place Saturday, January 9, 2:00-6:00 p.m. It's co-sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation and the Roosevelt Island Historical Society.

The exhibition of Vlamis's photographs, *Welfare Island: A Spirit of Place Past*, will be open from Sunday, December 20, through the end of January.

Suzanne Vlamis recounts that, walking along the East River esplanade as a child, the dark, mysterious island across the water captured her eye and imagination. Intrigued by the massive buildings, she was drawn to explore this place. When she did, seeing the light and shadows among the abandoned buildings, she knew that she had to document its waning urban landscape.

She did her work despite obstacles. She outwitted the lone patrol officer, ducking in and out of the shells of empty buildings. When warned that the sites were off-limits, she secured a letter from the Department of Hospitals granting her permission to photograph them.

"I found an eerie beauty," said Vlamis. "I was compelled to capture those places that were grotesquely beautiful – the massive, bulky hulks of buildings, the elegant castles, the stone and the light." Halls that once bustled with the activity of patients, doctors, and nurses now stood vacant and mute.

Vlamis documented the architectural remains of the hospitals, asylum, labs, and churches from 1969 to 1971, often without knowing the names of the buildings, since there were few identifying signs. Her only companions were her cousin Theo, who once worked in a nearby luncheonette, or a boyfriend/bodyguard, who accompanied her over the Queensboro Bridge, through Queens, and across the 36th Avenue Bridge. Wandering around the Island, she saw thieves stripping the copper from the buildings, or a dog eager to nip at her ankles as she rode by on her bicycle.

Having been a student at Long Island University, Vlamis shared the photographs with a professor. This resulted in her being invited to organize a show, *Welfare Island and Other Stories*, her first one-woman show, at LIU's Brooklyn campus in 1972.

But then the photos went into storage. Vlamis worked for the Associated Press for more than 30 years, rising from stringer to become the AP's first full-time female staff photographer, later supervising news features photo editor, and finally as special projects photo editor in the news agency's photo archives.

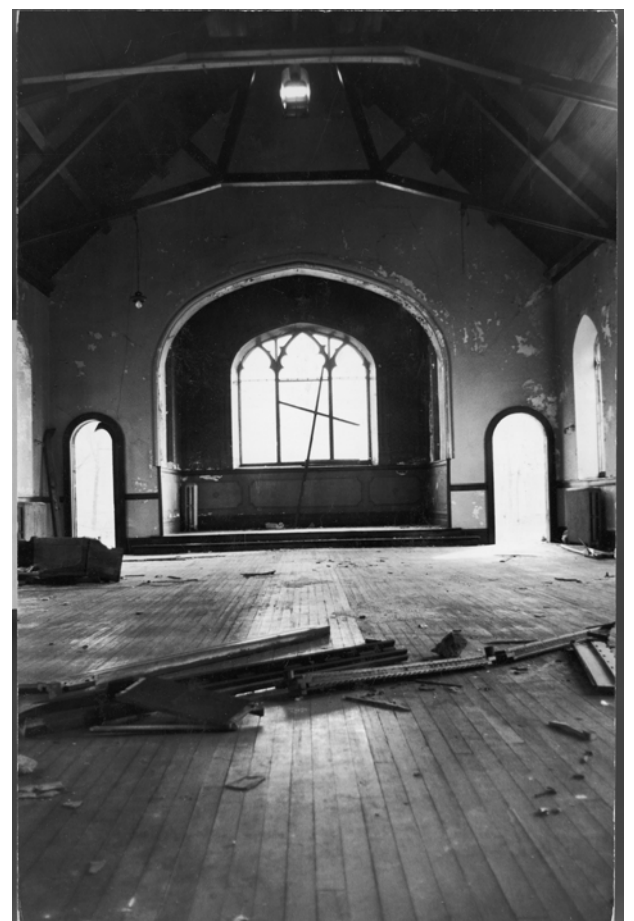
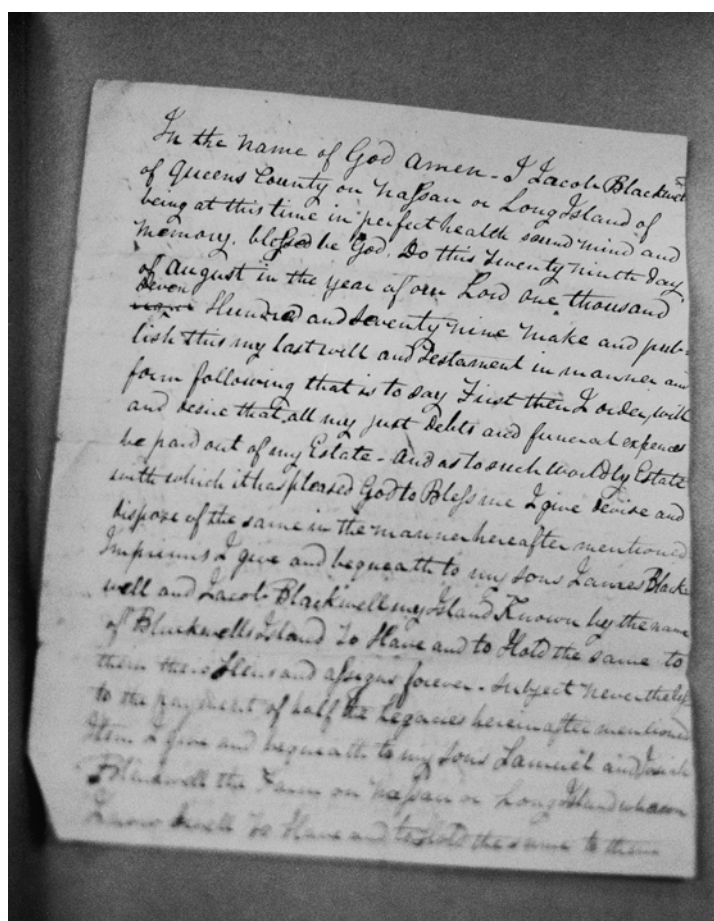
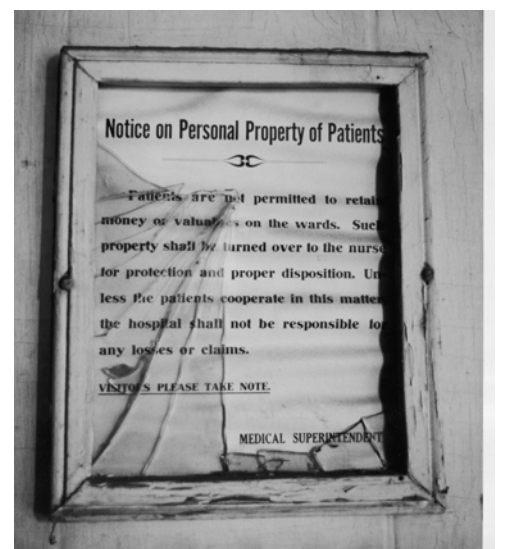
In April 2009, Vlamis was surprised to receive a phone call from Judith Berdy, President of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. "I had read a *New York Times* review of an exhibition of photographs of Welfare Island," said Berdy. "By the end of the day, I had located Suzanne and we began to discuss how the photos might be exhibited in conjunction with the 40th anniversary."

Vlamis says she is thrilled to share her photos with a contemporary audience. This exhibition, including photographs never before exhibited, portrays her perception of the Island as it was. "People left their imprint. Many lives were saved and nurtured, and others expired." Her pictures testify to the Island's history of healing.

Additional programs are planned in the 40th anniversary observance. Berdy says they will feature presentations about the history of the architecture and the parks, the integration of hospital residents into the residential community, and other events and projects.



Key to photographs is on page 26



...Suzanne Vlamis Photographed the Island as It Was



All photos are
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Suzanne Vlamis



Island Pioneers

Community’s Earliest Wives Arrived Amid a Wave of Feminism

by Jennifer Dunning

For all its early bucolic charm, Roosevelt Island was a quiet part of the world’s push and pull from the earliest days, and not just as a bedroom community for United Nations staff. The women’s movement of the 1970s was subtly reflected in the experiences of six women who moved to the Island at mid-decade, and gathered this year to share their memories in a freewheeling discussion for *The Main Street WIRE’s Pioneers Project*.

All of them had long known one another in this small-town community in a big-city setting. Most bonded as friends almost from the first moments that they spotted one another, often watching over children in the Island’s playgrounds. “She was my soulmate!” said Terry Dancik, one of the pioneers, speaking of Karen Mann, another participant in the interview, which often erupted into a hubbub of excited, simultaneous talk.

Diana Brill and her family moved to the Island in January, 1978, in the midst of one of the City’s worst blizzards. They arrived at night, delayed by the storm. At first, Herman Lawson, the beloved but memorably crusty Rivercross doorman for many years, said it was too late to move in. Eventually, he relented. “The first person we met was Karen. She was in the snow watching us unpack and she said, ‘Hi, my name is Karen!’ I think one of the most amazing things about moving to Roosevelt Island, in the middle of a blizzard with two little, tiny children, was how friendly everybody was. And how helpful, and also how many women had children exactly the same age as I did.”

Connie Tanner had a different circle of friends. “But I knew you guys,” she said. “I don’t think my children or anyone in our group knew who their parents were because we spent so much time together! We were interchangeable! And it was an incredible way to grow up.” When her daughter, Gretchen, moved to Prospect Heights in Brooklyn, she was surprised not to find “what she had on Roosevelt Island,” her mother said. “It’s wonderful where she is, but it’s not Roosevelt Island.”

Because their children were all around the same age, Ms. Dancik said, the place was like “a giant day-care center.” It was, she said, “a giant playground. Karen and I would speak with each other in our sweats, or our pajamas, with the wheeled carriages, because what would you do with babies? I wheel my mother over to your house now! You go full circle. I moved my mom up here. She’s now 93. So it’s a community that serves everyone. That’s the one thing that’s very dear to me.”

Friends became family, sometimes as traditional families faced divorce. And in this group, as with many of the other early Island settlers, there was a sense that you could make the world that you wanted in this new community.

These women had no need for the assertiveness training that was a part of the time, at least when it came to grassroots activism. They helped to create Island institutions, including the community theater groups for adults and children, the local synagogue, and *The WIRE*, which was named for Westview, Island House, Rivercross, and Eastwood, the four original buildings. Founded by Dr. Jack Resnick and Barry Puritz, the husbands of Ms. Dancik and Ms. Mann, respec-

tively, the paper was printed in Brooklyn. The Resnicks took it there every two weeks, Ms. Dancik remembered. She was advertising sales manager.

“I was the inquiring reporter,” said Diana Brill. “I had to ask controversial questions. We had the confidence, and we really felt we could do anything we wanted.”

Much of the community-building happened during volleyball games and barbecue parties at the original Octagon Park. “I probably couldn’t get it over the net anymore!” added Ms. Brill, laughing. “So, at one of these infamous volleyball parties, we decided we were going to start a theater! The story of how we ever got this theater was just a miracle, because we started at Goldwater Hospital and got kicked out because we hadn’t paid our bills. Eager beavers that we were, we sold four hundred subscription series for three shows.”

But the producer spent most of the money on the first show. “I don’t care if you have to take out your pointe shoes, you’re going to have to figure out a way to come up with the money to have two more shows,” her husband told Ms. Brill, a former dancer and noted teacher.

“And we did,” she recalled. “By the end of the third show,

asked, wonderingly. When they arrived at the ballet school, they met another Island child headed for the same class.

Some things functioned less perfectly. Take the first Island schools. The Silvermans moved to Roosevelt Island in 1977. “My children came ahead of me in order to go to the school, which was a disaster,” Ms. Silverman said. “The school system was very, very strange. They had anticipated a lot of little kids, and so they built this wonderful thing over by Westview, which was supposed to have open classrooms. Turned out they had more big kids than little kids. The principal didn’t have an intercom. She used to run up and down the street because there was no phone system for all the classrooms that were in Eastwood, Westview, Island House, and Rivercross. So the kindergarten was isolated with windows that didn’t open. It was totally bizarre. And of course, because it was a new system, they had no way of judging how many teachers they would need.” There were no data on this new population. The Silverman children made it through to November, and then were placed in private schools.

Older children sometimes felt stranded living on the Island, with the East River dividing them from the rest of the world. “My daughter always complained about living here,” Ms. Lader said. “She went to school here and then she went to Stuyvesant. A lot of her friends didn’t want to come back here. They wanted to be in the City. It didn’t have a lot of things that a normal community had.”

Several of the women remembered a time when station wagons, which they called for pickup, provided the equivalent of Island bus service. And you could call Public Safety, Ms. Brill recalled, to walk you from Motorgate at night.

A sadness creeps into the conversation as the women talk of how their early activism has abated. “That’s the only thing I get nostalgic about,” Ms. Mann said. “Thinking back to what we did. You don’t get that opportunity where you get a chance to create or plan your community. And that’s one of the many problems with growing older. I don’t know if one becomes less involved because of life’s circumstances.”

Ms. Brill thought that might be it. “It could be because we all did so much when we were younger that it was time for us to move on and let others come in and have the same kind of enthusiasm that we had. I don’t have that. I do other things with my free time.”

What about today’s young

wives? “When I see the Island falling apart, which it seems to be in many ways, I always say, *Well, where are the young people?*” Ms. Mann said. “Like we were.” She had not wanted to move from Greenwich Village to the Island, she said, and she thinks often these days of moving away. “But it’s too expensive to move,” she said. “And I love my life here, my friends here. They’re family.”

Certainly, her fighting days are over. “When they threatened to close the Tram, I was on the radio. You contacted all the media. I was mad. We protested, we had bullhorns, we had our kids in front of us. I was in constant contact with Pete Grannis [who represented the Island as State Assemblymember for many years]. He would call me from wherever he was, even in the Legislature upstate. He’d say, *OK, we’re talking about it now*. And I’d say, *OK, thanks, Pete*.”

“We’re done. But where are the new people when the sidewalks aren’t being fixed?”

Speaking of sidewalks, it was the “Z-bricks,” of which some Island streets and walkways are built (there were more then), that drew Ms. Tanner to the place. “We got off the Tram and I saw the Z-bricks and that was all I needed,” she recalled. “I said, *David, we’re living here*. And he said, *You haven’t seen any place yet*.” Connie didn’t care. “I looked at the ground. I said, *We have to live here*.” Her husband objected. After all, they had no idea what real estate prices were like on the Island. *I don’t care what they’re charging*, his wife retorted. *I love the ground*.

“As it turns out,” she adds, “it was the cheapest place, the biggest place, and they had Z-bricks.”

There are still Z-bricks on the Island. And other unexpectedly beautiful sights. “I’ve been here for 32 years and I can be on the phone and I’ll see something and say, *Oh, look at that boat coming down the river!*” Ms. Dancik said.

All a part of the world these early Roosevelt Island wives created. “Gee, it’s kind of funny,” Ms. Mann said softly. “We did a lot.”

Terri Dancik



Karen Mann



Naomi Gale Silverman



Myrna Lader



Diana Brill



Connie Tanner

we started a children’s theater to pay the bills. It was a huge success. Of course, it had only our children to begin with, but it did grow.” Founded in 1982, it eventually became the Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance, blossoming under the direction of Nancy and Worth Howe, theater professionals and friends of Ms. Brill.

One peculiar downside of the project was that participants tended to have a high rate of divorce. These pioneers looked bemused, in a slightly studied way, when asked why that might be so. *Who knows?* they shrugged. Divorce happens.

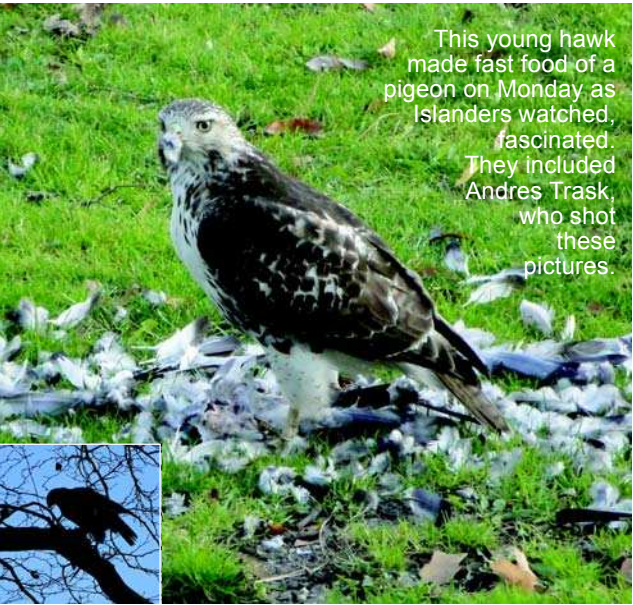
And the sense of community was reassuring. You could borrow money from a near stranger, for instance. “My cousin was coming from Australia and I hadn’t seen him in years and years,” Ms. Tanner remembered. “I had 20 minutes to put dinner together. Clearly, I wasn’t going to cook anything. I had no money. And I didn’t even have time to go to the bank. I went into the delicatessen and happened to see a neighbor. I said, *Can you give me twenty dollars?* You can’t do that in New York, so I think he thought I was crazy. I didn’t even know him that well, but he gave me twenty dollars and I paid him back the next day.”

A mere ride on the Tram in the early years was an unusual experience of togetherness. “You knew everybody on it, and you could jump into anyone’s conversation,” Naomi Silverman said.

“I don’t think a lot of people would have moved here without the Tram,” Myrna Lader said.

Ms. Tanner had at least one unforgettable experience of community Tram-riding. She had to get a friend of her daughter’s to ballet class. Once again, she had no money available. “I said, ‘Don’t worry, I’ll see someone on the Tram that I know and we’ll get the money.’ I knew people on the City bus. And we walked into a restaurant, I knew people there.”

“Do you know everyone in New York City?” the child

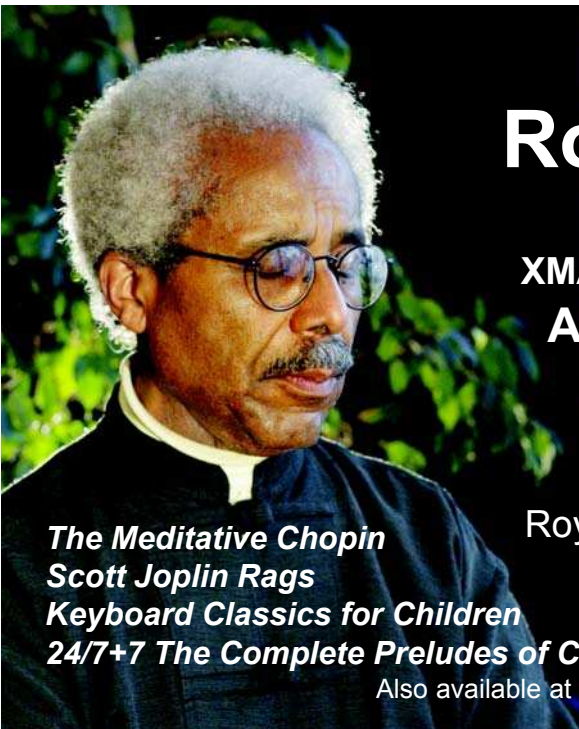


This young hawk made fast food of a pigeon on Monday as Islanders watched, fascinated. They included Andres Trask, who shot these pictures.



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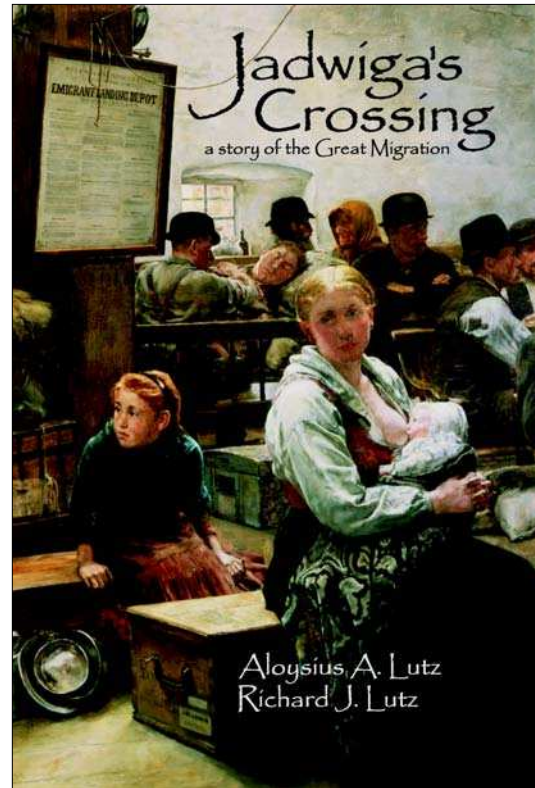


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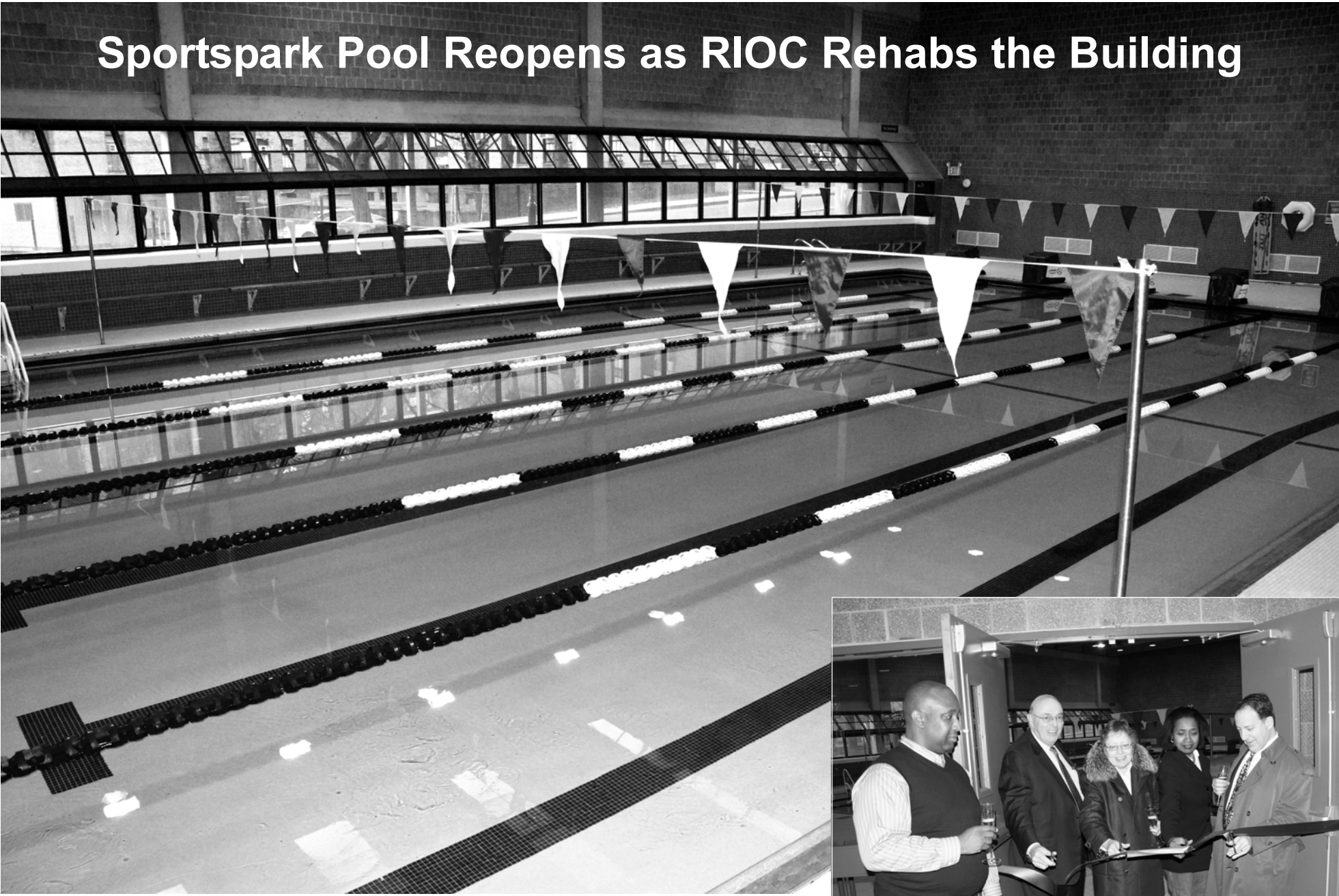
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Three members of the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation joined RIOC President Steve Shane Thursday afternoon to cut a ribbon and formally reopen the pool at Sportspark. Mike Smith, on the left, is putting together a series of programs, and pool time has been reserved for certain groups. The schedule is on the RIOC website at rioc.com. Cutting the ribbon, left to right: Shane, Dr. Kathie Grimm, Fay Christian, and Howard Polivy.

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Women's Doubles Finalists – Akiko Shimomura and Atsumi Kolba
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Women's Singles Finalist – Akiko Shimomura
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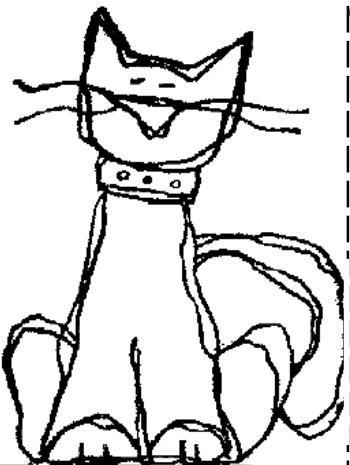
The courts remain open through March 31 to players with valid 2009-10 permits, when weather permits, even though RIOC maintenance of the courts ended November 30. Lights will be available for evening play.

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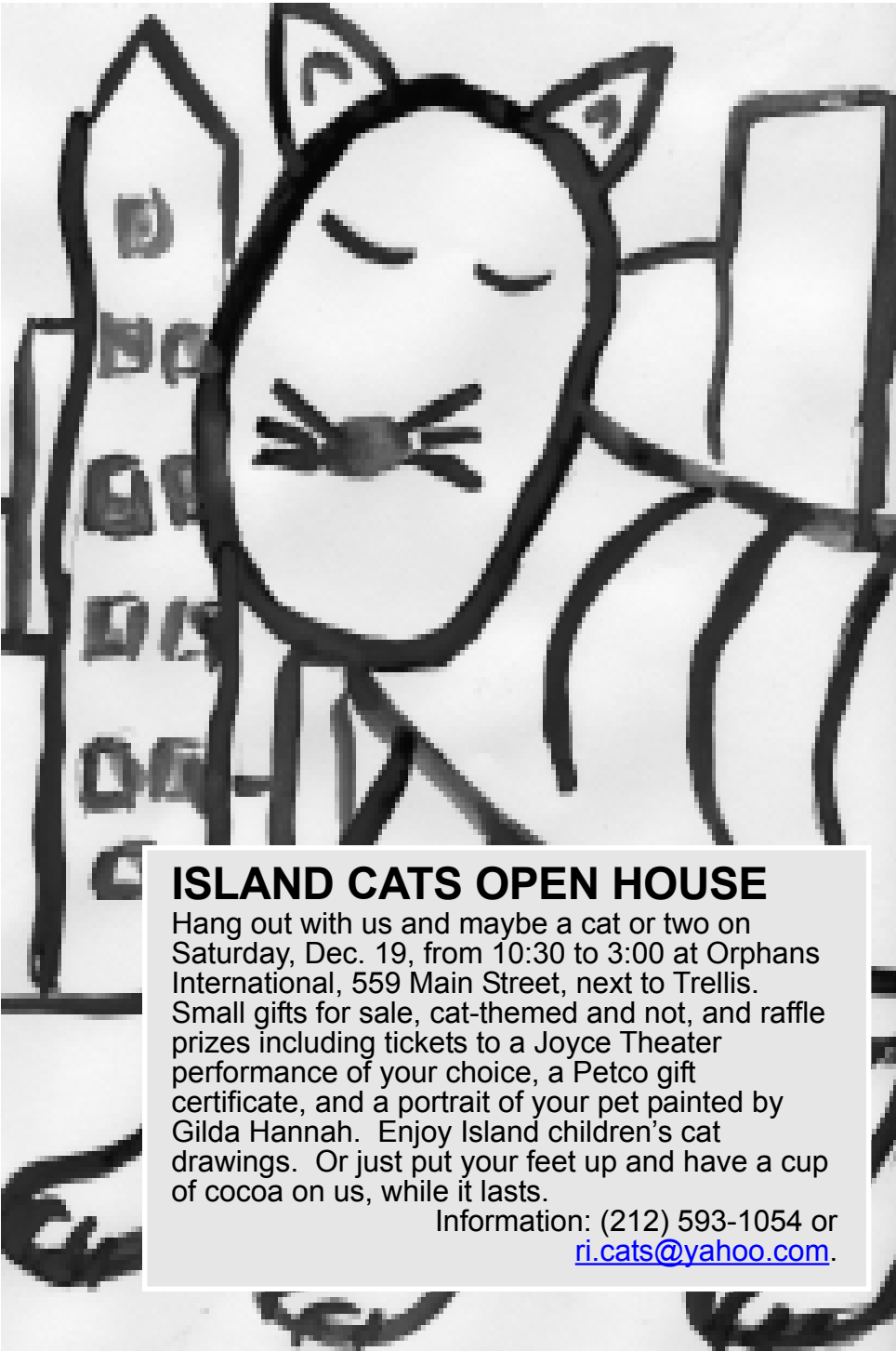
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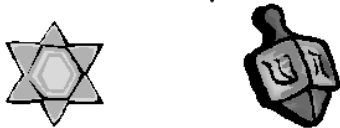
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COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Boy Scouts’ Christmas Tree Sale, today (Sat Dec 12) and next Saturday, 10am-6pm, and tomorrow (Sun Dec 13), 1-6pm, under the ramp at Motorgate. Also some weeknights, 6-8pm, and next Sunday. (See ad, page 5.)



Menorah Lighting, today (Sat Dec 12), 6pm, Blackwell House. (See ad, page 11.)

Opening Reception for *Off the Wall*, a members’ exhibition with guests, today (Sat Dec 12), 6-9pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Exhibition continues thru Jan 31. Gallery hours Sat-Sun 11am-5pm, Wed & Fri 6-9pm.



Island Kids Winter Holiday Celebration and fundraiser, tomorrow (Sun Dec 13), with two readings of *Gus, the Feeling Good Polar Bear* by Angela Parrino. \$10/child. Registration required; call 212-317-0216. (See ad, page 17, for schedule.)

Chanukah Party, tomorrow (Sun Dec 13), 4-6pm, sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation. (See ad, page 24.)

— Continuing —

Open Swim at Sportspark, **Mon-Fri**, 6-11am (all ages). Adults, \$5; children, \$3; seniors 60 and over, and children 4 and under, free. For additional times and classes, with age restrictions, see tinyurl.com/poolSP.

Knitting for Adults, Tue noon, Library.

Crafts for Children (ages 4-12), Tue 3:30pm, Library.

Poetry Hour (adults), last Tue of month, 6pm, Library.

Picture Book Hour (age 4 and under), Wed 11am, Library.

Book Bingo (ages 5-12), Thu 4pm, Library.

— Coming Week & Next Weekend —

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Dec 14**, 8pm. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Book Discussion, *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* by Jorge Amado, **Thu Dec 17**, 6:30pm, Library.

R&R Concert, an all-Bach holiday celebration, **Fri Dec 18**, 8pm, Good Shepherd Center. Free; contributions welcome. (See ad, page 2.)

Island Cats Open House, **Sat Dec 19**, 10:30am-3pm, 559 Main St. Cocoa, pet portraits, theater tickets, Petco gift certificates. (See ad, page 24.)

Bearded Bards (minus one) **Strike Again**, folk music with guitar and uke, **Sat Dec 19**, 5:15pm, Library.

Welfare Island: *A Spirit of Place Past* available for viewing at Octagon Gallery starting **Sun Dec 20**, 10am-8pm daily. See Jan 9 for opening reception. (See article and photographs, pages 18 and 19.)

Christmas Candlelight Service and Carol Sing, **Sun Dec 20**, 8pm, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, presented by the Church of the Good Shepherd. Refreshments follow. (See ad, page 17.)

— Future Weeks —

Deadline to apply for 2010 Public Purpose Funding, **Thu Dec 31**, 5pm. Application form at rioc.com/grants.htm.

— 2010 —



Opening Reception for *Welfare Island: A Spirit of Place Past*, an exhibition of Suzanne Vlamis’s photographs of the Island before transformation, **Sat Jan 9**, 2-6pm, Octagon Gallery, 888 Main Street. (See story, page 18.)

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Jan 11**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue in 5 weeks, on **Sat Jan 16, 2010**.

Advertising Deadlines:

Ads in the paper, Tue Jan 12; decision date for circulars/inserts, Tue Jan 12; 6,000 copies due Thu Jan 14. **Additional issues in 2010:** Jan 30; Feb 13, 27; Mar 13, 27; Apr 10, 24; May 8, 22; Jun 5, 19; Jul 3, 31; Aug 28; Sep 11, 25; Oct 9, 23; Nov 6, 20; Dec 4, 18. **News phone, 212-826-9056;** urgent matters, 917-617-0449. Advertising, display and classified: 917-587-3278.



Book Discussion, *The Door* by Margaret Atwood, **Thu Jan 21**, 6:30pm, Library.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Jan 25**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Feb 8**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Book Discussion, *Go Tell It On the Mountain* by James Baldwin, **Thu Feb 18**, 6:30pm, Library.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Feb 22**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Black History Month event, **Sat Feb 27**, 4pm, Good Shepherd Community Center.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Mar 8**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Book Discussion, *March* by Geraldine Brooks, **Thu Mar 18**, 6:30pm, Library.

Women’s History Month event, **Sat Mar 20**, Gallery RIVAA, 2pm.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Mar 22**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Easter Egg Hunt, **Sun Mar 28**, 1:30pm, Blackwell Park.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Apr 12**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Book Discussion, *My Antonia* by Willa Cather, **Thu Apr 15**, 6:30pm, Library.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Apr 26**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. For information, call 212-751-9577 or 212-751-1194.

Senior Center

Special Events

Diabetes Screening, Mon Dec 14, noon

Nutrition Lecture, Fri Dec 18, 11:15am

Holiday Party, Sat Dec 19, 6pm

Yonkers Casino trip, Mon Dec 21, noon

Katz’s Delicatessen trip, Tue Dec 22, 2pm

Closed Fri Dec 25

New Year’s Eve Party, Thu Dec 31, 8pm

Closed Fri Jan 1, 2010

Monday
9:30 **Ballroom Dancing**
11:00 **Tai Chi**
6:00 **Yoga with Nurit**

Tuesday
9:30 **Chinese Massage**
10:20 **Shoppers’ Bus**
10:30 **Blood Pressure**
2:00 **Paint & Sculpt**
7:30 **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday
9:30 **Yoga with Irene**
10:20 **Shoppers’ Bus**
10:30 **Spanish**
10:30 **Computers**
2:00 **Bingo**
7:00 **Pokeno (RISA)**

Thursday
9:30 **Get Stronger Bones**
11:00 **Creative Arts**
12:30 **Movie**

Friday
9:30 **Yoga with Irene**
10:30 **English as 2nd Language**
10:45-11:25 **Art & Poetry** with Legacy High School

1:30 **Korean Games**
7:00 **Games (RISA)**

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MTA from page 3

problem that most rush-hour passengers living here have experienced.

Farance’s solution involves a Q shuttle that would operate only from 21st Street/Queensbridge through Roosevelt Island to 57th Street and Seventh Avenue, then continue on the Q line.

He has in mind a reconfiguration of Red Bus operations that would deliver a large number of passengers for the special trains.

According to Katz, the MTA’s answer was, “We don’t do that,” twice. The reason quoted (second-hand, since the press was not present to take first-hand note of the MTA’s rationale) is that, to reverse a train’s direction, the brakes must be applied, then “pumped up”

to release them to move again – that is, a compressed air system must lift brake shoes from the steel wheels to release the brakes – and that process has been known to fail at times. Such a failure on a regular line would tie up that line but, apparently, the MTA believes that the chances of such a failure are greater when a train is parked while an operator moves from one end of the train to the other.

The MTA representatives offered no alternative solution.

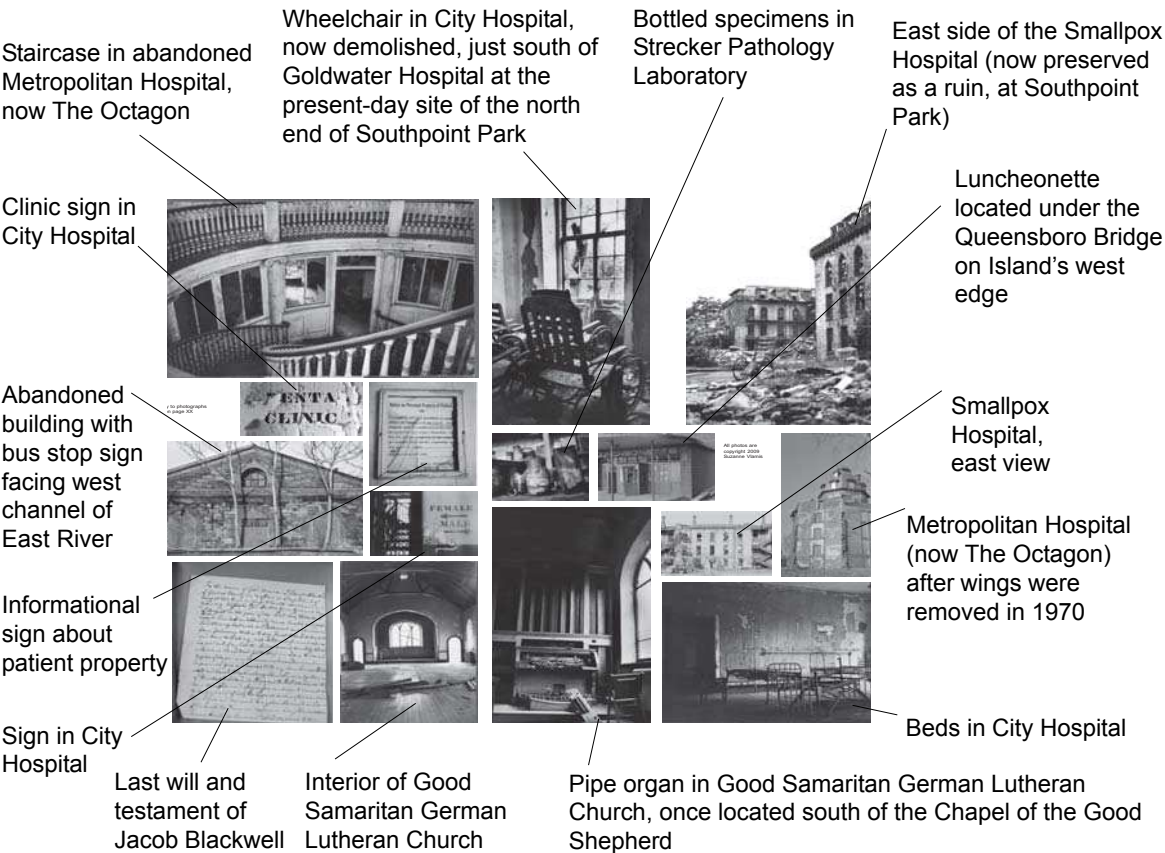
The MTA’s attitude was summarized in a Farance paraphrase of an official who said, “You guys are no different from the Bedford Avenue station in Brooklyn.” But Farance pointed out that, in most parts of New York City, there are alterna-

tives: bus service, ready availability of a taxi, or an alternate subway line. He says that he told an MTA official, in a side conversation, that Roosevelt Island is actually different because there are no viable alternatives here – that even the Q102 bus is highly irregular as to timing and, in any case, it goes to Queens rather than Manhattan.

RIOC Board member Jonathan Kalkin, who attended the meeting, was reported as having discussed the problem of wrong-way escalators, which were billed as being reversible at the time that they were installed. Katz also brought up the problem of pigeon droppings in the station, including on turnstiles where MetroCards are swiped.

Key to Suzanne Vlamis Photographs on pages 18-19

prepared by Judith Berdy of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society



Health & Fitness Day, **Sat May 15**, 11am-5pm, Capobianco Field & Sportspark.

Book Discussion, *Mister Pip* by Lloyd Jones, **Thu May 20**, 6:30pm, Library.

Roosevelt Island Day, **Sat Jun 12**, all day.

Book Discussion, *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, **Thu Jun 17**, 6:30pm, Library.

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, **Sat Jun 26**, evening, Firefighters Field.

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, **Sat Jul 10**, evening, Firefighters Field.

Book Discussion, *August, Osage County* by Tracy Letts, **Thu Jul 15**, 6:30pm, Library.

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, **Sat Jul 24**, evening, Firefighters Field.

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, **Sat Aug 7**, evening, Firefighters Field.

Book Discussion, *The White Tiger* by Adiga Aravind, **Thu Aug 19**, 6:30pm, Library.

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, **Sat Aug 21**, evening, Firefighters Field.

Fall for Arts Festival, **Sat Oct 2**, 11am-4pm, Good Shepherd Plaza and nearby areas.

Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony, **Thu Dec 2**, 7pm, Blackwell Plaza.

COMING UP

Many 2010 events are listed in the second printing of *The Main Street WIRE’s 2010 Roosevelt Island Wall Calendar*, still on sale for one week, while supplies last.

See ad, page 4.

Valeria Reyes

A Very Real Tale

Once upon a time, a family of six came from Puerto Rico to Roosevelt Island. They moved from their island to ours because the daughter was diagnosed with a brain tumor and required the care of the specialists at Sloan Kettering.

With a spirit as big as the sun and a smile to match, in no time this girl befriended two Island residents of the same age. Aware of and uninhibited by her condition, they became a trio, and friendship grew. Understanding chemotherapy was only one of the many things to learn, between homework assignments. Side effects due to the treatment were just an adjustment made as life went on.

Playdates, sleepovers, movie nights, karaoke contests – the three never ran out of ideas. Their favorite activity was going to the park next door, returning home for rice, beans, and tostones.

Time passed... ups and downs, laughs and tears, the tempo was always the same *hope, love, and friendship*.

When summer arrived and family vacations separated the three, somehow a few days were spared and they went from the little island in the East River to the big one in the Caribbean. Over the course of 10 days, the three banditas and their families conquered San Juan and every plantain in the territory.

Back home, school started for some, and chemo for another. A visit before homework almost every day, and life was moving on, one breath at a time... until there were no more. On November 20, the chord lost a note and the harmony suddenly did not sound the same.

Today, the two treasure the gift that their friend left them, a gift that they never expected: the understanding that life, as short as it may be, can be lived fully.

We’ve all heard or said at one point in our lives that *Things happen for a reason*. We don’t think about the real meaning of it unless something happens.

It happened. Three lives entwined, three families joined, a life so well lived that we all noticed.

Wong and Herlihy Families

Valeria, age 12, was laid to rest in Bayamon, Puerto Rico, on November 28. Two beautiful angel wings were placed on her casket. Music and dances accompanied her on her journey, thousands of rose petals were thrown above her grave, and in the beautiful sunny sky that Saturday, we could all read her favorite words, “Sonrisas Hacen Milagros” (Smiles Make Miracles). Her parents, Nayda and Gerardo, and her three brothers – Gerardo, 14, Maximo, 9, and Gustavo, 6 – are hoping to stay in New York, start a new life, and call Roosevelt Island home.



On Having, and Losing, a Friend

Danielle and I lost our best friend on Thursday night. We are all so sad, but we know that she is always with us. We had so much fun. I remember when we would sit at home and make bracelets. Sit there and watch TV. I remember that her favorite show and singer was Hannah Montana. I remember Danielle, Valeria, and me singing and dancing to all the songs. Valeria’s favorite song was *The Climb*. Every time I hear that song, I think of her.

I will always think that it would really explain her story. She knew that there was always going to be another mountain that she had to face. That there was always going to be that uphill battle that she would have to fight and that it was the climb for her. I knew that she would keep climbing till she got to the top because I knew that she was able to and that she was strong and brave. I knew it.

I know that she is still taking that climb right now, looking over us and telling us that she is proud, and we are saying the same thing back. We are all a family, and my two sisters are Valeria and Danielle. And it will always stay that way.

Another thing that I remember is that, for her birthday, Danielle and I were having bake sales and lemonade stands outside so we can get her this American Doll that she wanted so much and was saving up for. I remember the second that we walked inside that store our mouths dropped because of how big that store was. Picking out the doll was so much fun that we then went to see if there were other outfits for

the doll.

We had seen a volley-ball outfit and then we had remembered that Valeria was the seventh on a volley-ball team called the *MKA Girls*. We knew that she really liked that team. She would talk about it all the time. We then got the doll’s ears pierced, and that was fun.

I can still see the moment when we gave her the doll. She was speechless. She was so happy. When she got the doll, it was in a pink dress, and that was Valeria’s favorite color. Those were really good times that we had as sisters.

Keep taking that climb, Viva; we know you can do it. *Te amo!*

Illiana Wong

My name is Danielle Herlihy and, in February of this year, new neighbors moved in, a family with three brothers and a girl named Valeria. Sometimes I can be shy, but I found it really easy to be friends with her. She was my age and we had a lot in common. We both had a big family, and we loved the same music and the same TV shows.

I introduced her to a friend of mine named Illiana, and we became a trio very quickly. We all liked many of the same things, like playing in the park on the swings. The only thing that was standing between us was how to do it. That may sound strange, but, you see, Valeria was living with brain cancer, and sometimes she couldn’t do the things that we all wanted to do... or so we thought. Very quickly, it became easy to talk about the differences, and she always told us how to help her so she could do the same things as us. Some we still couldn’t do, but a lot we could.

Valeria fought this cancer for 4½ years, but we only met her in the last year, so, very quickly, things changed to where there was more that she couldn’t do of the old stuff. So we just figured out different things to do. We watched TV at the hospital rather than in the house. We read books and teen magazines to her. We just simply played, sang, and danced at her bedside. She began to answer us about what she wanted to play with a squeeze of her hand, a bend of her leg, or a wink of her eye. It all changed very quickly in the last two months, but we never stopped trying to figure out how we could still play.

On November 20, our friend Valeria, “Viva,” went to play with the angels in heaven. She was only 12 years old. Illiana and I are *so* sad, but that won’t stop us from still trying to figure out how we can play with her and, as usual, we know she will help us.

Viva, we miss you and love you!

Danielle Herlihy

Roosevelt Island on the Web

compiled by Rick O’Conor – rooseveltislander.blogspot.com

Roosevelt Islander – Kicked Out of MTA Meeting with *WIRE* Editor – tinyurl.com/ykulpzf
Roosevelt Islander – Dog Run to Replace Blackwell Basketball Court? – tinyurl.com/yd2ea5f
Roosevelt Islander – RIOC Considers Ferry for Tram Outage – tinyurl.com/ygp9exr
The Bravest Tweet – Roosevelt Island Fire – tinyurl.com/yaxys9b
Kalkin Tweet – RIOC Committee to Prep Retail Master Lease Plan – tinyurl.com/yd4n2rm
Kellner Tweet – Wants Review Board for State Authority Police – tinyurl.com/yewe8l2
The Gov Monitor – Public Authorities Reform Act Passes Assembly – tinyurl.com/ykrjano
You Tube – Spider Man Saves Tram Riders from Plunge – tinyurl.com/yhlxgnk
RIOC – December Board of Directors Webcast – tinyurl.com/53qbkg
Bulgogi Brothers – 1968 Bizzarrini P538 Car on Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/ye2enqz
Our Town – 35th Anniversary Highlights Tram – tinyurl.com/yhmrm1k
You Tube – Perfect View of Queensboro Bridge and FDR Traffic – tinyurl.com/yf3lz7y
Recovery.gov – Manhattan Park’s \$4.48 Million In Stimulus Funds – tinyurl.com/ykgmray
You Tube – Fire At Island House – tinyurl.com/yexbv9x
State Comptroller’s Office – Warehousing Mitchell Lama Apartments – tinyurl.com/y19to95
Roosevelt Island Listings – Manhattan Park Room to Rent – tinyurl.com/yc3w387
SeeClickFix – Report & Fix Roosevelt Island Issues – tinyurl.com/yf3eaov
You Tube – Roosevelt Island Christmas Tree – tinyurl.com/yhbwsjm
AFL–CIO – Pension Fund Invests in Green Octagon Apartments – tinyurl.com/yknanh4
NY Times – Neediest Case Teen Lives Part-Time on RI – tinyurl.com/yjz5pqu
Wired NY – Great Roosevelt Island Photos – tinyurl.com/yf5tn9g
Runnin’ Scared – Missing Island Women Found In Flushing – tinyurl.com/yf7t8nf
Micah Kellner – Emergency Preparedness Presentation – tinyurl.com/ydnaxlo
RI Bus Tracker – Android Cell Phone Red Bus GPS Tracker – tinyurl.com/ykbw4ss
RIOC – Operations and Audit Committee Webcast – tinyurl.com/mff36v
RIOC – October Public Safety Statistics – tinyurl.com/y1bep4g
Roosevelt Island Historical Society – Photos of Island from 1968 – tinyurl.com/ygjl2mb
Associated Content – Reviews and Likes Trellis – tinyurl.com/y95n56b
NY Magazine – Resident Tim Keller a Leading Evangelical Preacher – tinyurl.com/yh9h97w
RI Moms – New Online Social Network for Moms Here – tinyurl.com/ydphc5j
Callmekcookz Tweet – America’s Next Top Model on Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/yjoszt5
City Limits – Foreclosures Worry Roosevelt Landings Residents – tinyurl.com/yb3khhk
Brain Terminal – Former Resident Recalls Ugly Main Street Signage – tinyurl.com/y8u5se6
Toon Zone – Red Garden Japanese Anime Series Takes Place on RI – tinyurl.com/ybqz5ey
Curbed – Google Maps 360 Panoramic Views of the Island – tinyurl.com/y9gu7vu
NY Times – Undercover at Psychiatric Hospital Like Nellie Bly – tinyurl.com/ygzvt5o
The Uptowner – Octagon Used as Example For Harlem Preservation – tinyurl.com/ykaq99h
Early American Crime – Stone Quarry at Blackwell’s Island – tinyurl.com/ygxmvz4
You Tube – Roosevelt Island Photos and Sound Track – tinyurl.com/yh2ahol
OHNY – Tram Photo Among Winners of Architectural Contest – tinyurl.com/y8f9rma

Ionel Teodorescu

Ionel “John” Teodorescu died on November 20.

Born in Smirdoasa, Romania, on March 17, 1949, he received his Master’s degree in hydro-engineering from Iasi Polytechnic University (Romania) in 1972. Right after university, he married his college sweetheart and raised, with much love and devotion, their two children. He is survived by his wife Cecilia and children George and Camelia.

He worked as a hydro-technical engineer from 1972-1986 in Brasov, Romania. In 1986, with his wife, he fled communist Romania. They lived in Italy until finally receiving permission to immigrate to Canada, Australia, or the United States. With two suitcases, they began the adventure of their life, in which they strived to integrate and provide for their family in the United States.

As a 21-year resident of Roosevelt Island, and a 10-year employee on the Roosevelt Island Aerial Tramway, he is known to many Islanders. His love of learning was fostered through his interactions with his fellow residents. During his time in the hospital, he couldn’t wait to be well again to return to work; he missed everyone.

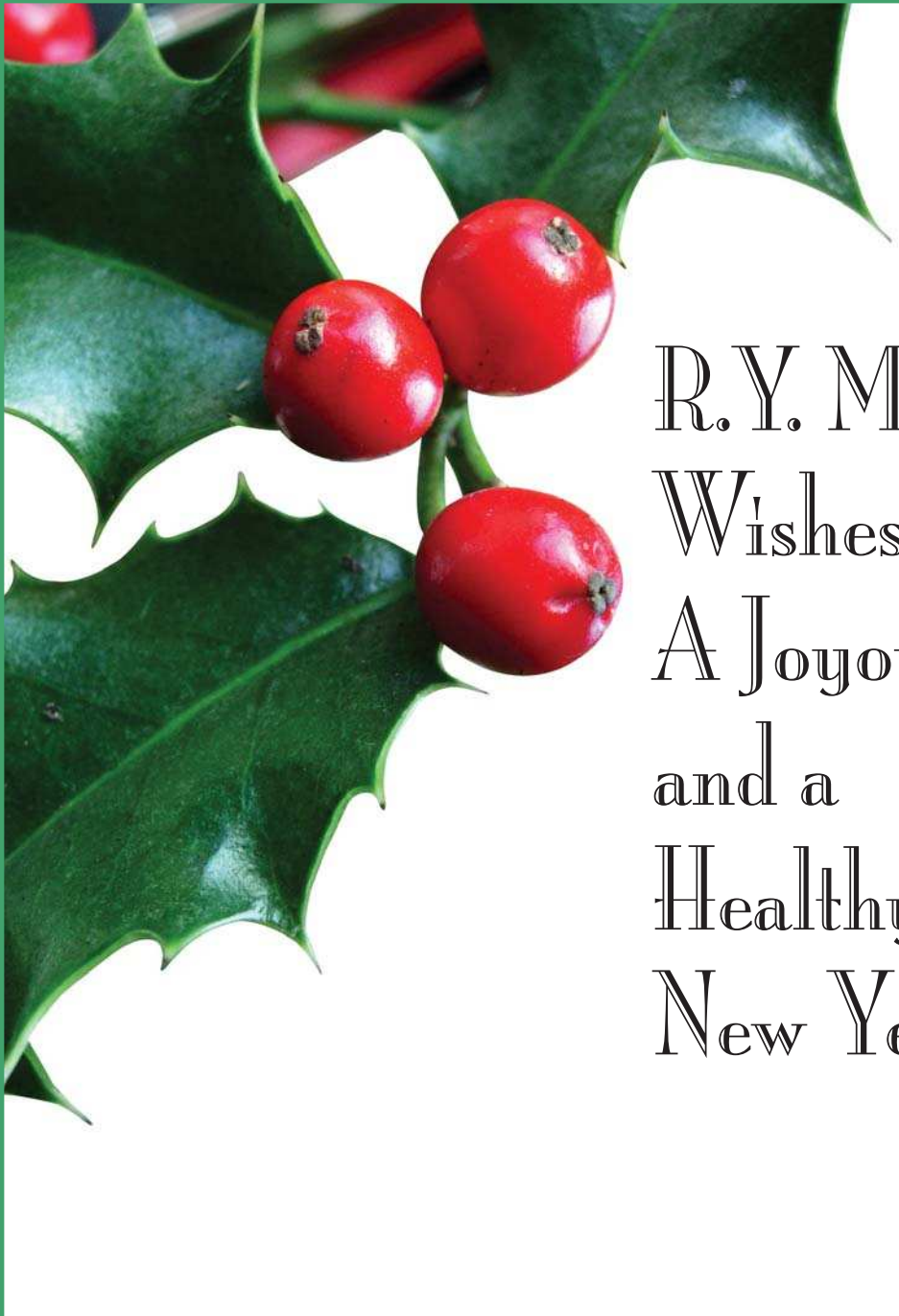
The wake was held on November 22 in Astoria, with a subsequent service on November 29 in the fairytale-like city of Brasov, Romania. He had died after an extremely short battle with lung cancer.

We are so fortunate to have settled on Roosevelt Island, a community like no other in America. We thank you, our friends, family, Roosevelt Island family, Tram colleagues, and RIOC for the incredible support that you have shown us.

We will also never forget you.

–Ionel “John” Teodorescu’s family





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A Contest for Kids’ Drawings of Cats Brings Out Budding Artists

There were happy cats and sad cats, a cat with a hip hairdo, a girly cat with a pink nose, and a “psycho cat,” according to the artist, that was straight out of “Mean Girls.” One cat followed a fish to a house on top of a hill. Another looked content with the full bowl of cat food a few inches from its nose. Fifty children submitted work late last month to a drawing competition sponsored by Island Cats, a volunteer group established five years ago to care for Roosevelt Island’s large outdoor cat population. And the results were so impressive that contest judges – members of the rescue group – decided to give the awards of \$20 to 15 rather than the planned 5 artists.

All the drawings will be exhibited during the week of December 14 in the Orphans International window on Main Street, where Island Cats will hold an Open House on Saturday, December 19. Among the items for sale then will be work by an adult professional artist, Gilda Hannah, who will paint a pet portrait as a raffle prize.

The children’s art selected for awards, judged not only on artistic merit but for its reproducibility on Island Cats merchandise, posters, and fliers, was created by Lillian Bak, Jose Benitez, Noa Betel, Maria Cacuci, Freddy Domenech, Jamil Fuller, Sally Goldberg, Orna Khan, Jonah Michel, Val Neves, Christian Pacheco, Melanie Ramos, Amanda Severe, Mathew Tendeau-Luce, and Connor Whelan. Some of the work was by Island toddlers, the rest by students at PS IS 217 and The Child School.

Camille Mouquinho, who teaches art at The Child School, confessed that she is an animal lover, and clearly several of her students are, too. Some drawings were ready-made for animal rescue posters. Other artists talked of taking good care of animals. “We can all help. Stop buying pets and adopt them,” Mr. Michel said, referring to the adoption of rescued rather than store-bought animals. Mr. Pacheco, whose swirling “Stray Black Cats” was startling in its bold assurance, urged WIRE readers to “be kind to cats we see on the streets.”

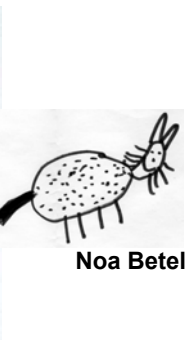
How can children’s artistic imaginations best be unleashed? “I love children and let them do what moves them in art,” Ms. Mouquinho said. “I am always calm and try to make the art room a loving, peaceful place where their creative juices can flow. I treat them all as serious artists. Being positive is key.”

Drawing cats seemed to be a popular assignment. Melanie Ramos, a student at PS IS 217, likes the designs on cats’ fur, she said. “I also like their personalities. They are all different from each other.” In her drawing, a large cat, fierce-looking but well-manicured, straddles small skyscrapers. “The cat I drew is the Queen of the City. She protects the City.”

Noa Betel, who is 5, contributed a smiling cat that clearly has a little bit of ladybug in its genes. Why does she like to draw cats, Ms. Betel was asked? “Because they’re cute. And their tails are so long. And I like to see them when we’re walking to the park.” The last sentence was punctuated by long pauses. It was not nap time, her mother reassured the reporter. The artist was just eager to get back to her drawing pad.



Lillian Bak



Noa Betel



Mathew Tendeau-Luce



Conner Whelan



Orna Khan



Sally Goldberg



Freddy Domenech

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**Reverend Olu S. Obed
For Dayspring Church.**



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after the Carol event



*Join us at a
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Service*

*On Thursday, December 31
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Robert Shick, DMD

Dr. Robert Shick received his DMD degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. He completed the residency program at Kings County Hospital and received a certificate of geriatric dental medicine at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center. Dr. Shick also received an award for American Top Dentist of the year for 2009.

Periodontist: Dr. Selma Kaplan, DMD

Dr. Selma Kaplan received her DMD from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Kaplan received her post-doctoral degree in periodontics from Columbia University. Presently, she is clinical instructor at Columbia University Periodontic Department.

Endodontist: Dr. Maria Pruss, DDS

Dr. Maria Pruss received her DDS from Nova Southeastern University School of Dental Medicine in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She went on to complete a hospital-based residency program at New York Presbyterian Hospital. In 2007, Dr. Pruss received her post-doctoral degree in endodontics from Nova Southeastern University. She dedicates her time to Friends Without a Border, including volunteer missions to Angkor Hospital for Children in Cambodia, as well as volunteer missions to Israel and Spain. She is a member of the American Association of Endodontics, American Dental Association, and New York State Dental Association.

Orthodontist: Dr. George Pliakas, DDS

Dr. George Pliakas received his DDS degree and certification of orthodontics from Columbia University School of Dental Medicine. He is proficient in Spanish and fluent in Greek. As a native of New York, Dr. Pliakas attended Bronx High School of Science and he received his B.S. degree from Harvard University.

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