The Closure of Beth Israel Will Be Stopped

By Arthur Z. Schwartz

June 11th marked a really sad day for those of us who live downtown. On that date, Beth Israel Hospital closed its Center for Labor and Birth.

Life is funny. The Catheterization Lab doctors at Beth Israel saved my life in January, when I got wheeled in with a heart attack. That was the same week in which Beth Israel closed its Cardiac Surgery Unit. While recovering, I looked out the windows and recognized the view. Twenty-nine and a half months later, I can remember that unit as an amazing place: Hasidic Jews from Williamsburg, Chinese women from Chinatown, Latins from the Lower East Side, Ukrainian moms, and a smattering of yuppies like my wife and me, all mixed together, with labor screams in multiple languages, and babies all being woven to behold. And now, due to the greed and avarice of the Beth Israel purchaser, that Center for Labor and Birth is gone.

Two months ago, I reported that Mount Sinai had filed the required “Certificate of Need” (CON) papers with the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) and that the “application for approval” was pending. What confused me was that other pending CONs, addressed to units that had already closed (like Cardiac Surgery), were also marked pending.

My research showed that a health facility only need file a CON within 90 days of an action occurring. Although the NYS DOH “approves” CONs, they could be filed 90 days after a continued on page 20

The Times Reads WestView

By George Capsis

Oh wow! The day after WestView June issue came out with the front-page article (“The Ego Fight for Diller Island”) about the now-years-long ego clash between Wall Street tough guy Steve Novogratz and staid developer Douglas Durst to control and shape the Hudson River Park, Charles Bagli of the Times released pretty much the same story, entitled “Clash of Titans,” and offered the name WestView has given to Pier 55—“Diller Island.” There’s no question that Bagli lives in the Village and reads WestView—how nice.

In my June article, I anticipated that the courts would reverse themselves and allow the Army Corps of Engineers to approve the now-radically-revised design for Diller Island (they changed the enormous bulbous mushroom-shaped piles to flattened, concrete lily pads). Of course, the courts did so and, right now as you read this, Barry Diller could be driving piles—kerbhang-kerbhang—kerbhang.

I called the very nice and soft-spoken president of the City Club of New York, Michael Gruen. He stated that they were still vigorously pursuing their resistance to Diller Island but could not, for strategic reasons, reveal what action they were taking. Bagli very nicely recapitulated the originating history of the ego clash but omitted that the New York Water Taxis’ executive Tom Fox was an early head of the Hudson River Park Trust, just before Madelyn Wils took over in 2011. Madelyn reports to the stately Ann Taylor who is the long-term paramour of Mike Bloomberg (Did you see Mike on 60 Minutes? He pilots a helicopter.)

You have to wonder why the consort to a billionaire needs to keep the title of Queen of the Hudson River Park when she has no real function. Indeed, the failure of management and the so-called board to select a developer for Pier 40 after 20 years and two continued on page 23

Musical Resurrection of St. Veronica’s Church

By George Capsis

On June 25th, the New York Catholic Archdiocese changed the locks and closed the 115-year-old St. Veronica’s Church on Christopher Street (just opposite Fox was an early head of the Hudson River Park) and that the “application for approval” was pending. What confused me was that the New York Water Taxis’ executive Tom Fox was an early head of the Hudson River Park Trust, just before Madelyn Wils took over in 2011. Madelyn reports to the stately Ann Taylor who is the long-term paramour of Mike Bloomberg (Did you see Mike on 60 Minutes? He pilots a helicopter.)

You have to wonder why the consort to a billionaire needs to keep the title of Queen of the Hudson River Park when she has no real function. Indeed, the failure of management and the so-called board to select a developer for Pier 40 after 20 years and two continued on page 23

The Times Reads WestView

By George Capsis

On June 25th, the New York Catholic Archdiocese changed the locks and closed the 115-year-old St. Veronica’s Church on Christopher Street (just opposite the Archive Building) to the very few who still tried to attend the continually diminishing religious services. Another church has been lost to the ever-waning call of traditional religion.

But wait! WestView Publisher George Capsis remembered the emergence of what is now one of the world’s most renowned classical music groups, the Orchestra of St. Luke’s. He emailed its founder, Michael Feldman, to ask his interest in considering St. Veronica’s light-flooded hall as perhaps the venue for a new orchestra dedicated to the great sacred and secular music.

“Gotta see it,” replied Feldman. Parishioner Terri Cook, who has an article in this issue (see page 4), opened the door of St. Veronica’s with her key and Feldman came back with, “Oh wow, terrific, 1000 seats.” We then asked WestView photographer Maggie Berkvist to jump in before the Archdiocese changed the locks to get a picture of the interior—she just made it. (See her photo on page 1.)

The closing of this issue fell on July 4th weekend and even continued on page 4

Blue Money
Janet Capron’s memoir, which chronicles her time as a prostitute in NYC, hits best-seller lists.

SEE PAGE 12

NYC Birding
Keith Michael ventures into the wilds of New York City for summer bird sightings.

SEE PAGE 14

Bleecker Street Blues
Name-brand shops are abandoning storefronts in a sky-high rental environment they helped to create.

SEE PAGE 12
Clarifying Statements in June’s “In and Out”

Dear Caroline:
I read your “In and Out” column with interest, as usual, in the latest WestView issue. I always welcome your news. But two things you wrote puzzle me.

You ended the section by saying that, “Perhaps the West Village is just not a favorable location for vegan restaurants.” What vegan restaurant? Certainly not Good, with its beef burgers, lamb burgers, steak, pork tenderloin, lots of chicken (fried and roasted), and many fish dishes. So what did that refer to?

And regarding A Clean Well-Lighted Place: It was not a gallery. It was a frame shop that I frequented often and which I miss.

But as usual, I am clipping your page so I can get around to what is new.

Hope all is well with you.

—Mimi Sheraton Falcone

Mimi Sheraton Falcone is a highly-regarded food critic and James Beard Award-winning author. She served as the Restaurant Critic for The New York Times (the first female to do so) and as the Editor of Seventeen Magazine. In discussing Ms. Sheraton Falcone, Jean-Georges Vongerichten declared that “…her glossy flavors is ultimate. Her opinion is like gold.”

Dear Ms. Sheraton Falcone:
I am delighted that you enjoy the “In and Out” column. I apologize for the confusion I caused in the June issue: You are of course correct. Good was not a vegan restaurant; the vegan comment referred to the following two restaurants I mentioned: Ladybird and Gingersnap’s Organic. But, reading it over, I see your point. I should have mentioned the order of the sentences or used different punctuation. As for A Clean, Well-Lighted Place, I remember it from when I first moved to the Village, but I don’t think I ever went inside. I got the impression that it was a gallery from a February 23, 2012 post in Jeremiah’s Vanishing New York blog, bemoaning the closing of the art gallery A Clean, Well-Lighted Place. We will do better with our fact-checking in the future! Thanks again for your feedback.

—Caroline Berenwine

Diller Island Perspective

Dear Editors:
I would like to respond to the article entitled “The Ego Fight for Diller Island,” published in the June issue of WestView News. The amendment to the Hudson River Park Act in June 2013 was not passed by Assemblymember Deborah Glick alone, but by the entire New York State Legislature by a vote of 135 to 7, with all New York City legislators supporting it. Assemblymember Richard Gottfried was the lead sponsor, with Deborah Glick and Helen Rosenthal as co-sponsors. New York State Senator Brad Hoylman also supported it. To the best of my knowledge, not one New York City councilmember or other City official opposed it. The Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, however, did oppose the amendment because of the huge transfer of air rights from the park to upland historic areas; this would allow buildings of unlimited height to dwarf the neighborhood. An arbitrary and little-understood provision of zoning law, known as TDR, or Transfer of Development Rights, subverts and vitiates the basic purpose of zoning, to define and protect the character of neighborhoods. In the case of the four-mile-long Hudson River Park, development or air rights can be transferred from the park to the West Village without any statutory limits on the amount of floor area dumped on a zoning lot over and above that which is otherwise permitted.

The June article praises the defunct and unfortunately defeated Interstate Westway which “…would have allowed West Villagers to walk on the grass to the shore of the Hudson River…” In fact, it would have created a massive development of high rises built far out into the river, blocking access to it and overshadowing the West Village. The buried Westway would have required a surface access highway and access ramps leading down to a tunnel that would have become the greatest storm sewer in Manhattan during Hurricane Sandy. The park we have now is a great achievement, which brings pleasure to thousands of walkers, joggers, and sitters who enjoy spectacular unobstructed views of New York Bay.

Where we need the grass now is on Pier 40, which claims to have enough disposable air rights to create a series of high rises upland while continuing to maintain the largest parking garage on the West Side, blocking views of and access to the river for three blocks.

—Barry Benepe

America, The Same Country

Dear Editors:
America killed Philando Castile, who had his seat belt on while his girlfriend and child were in the car, while it was streamed live. It’s the same country that allowed racist Jeff Sessions to become the head national law enforcement officer.

It’s the same country that allows a billionaire with zero experience, who never went to public school, to lead the Department of Education.

It’s the same country that allows an anti-environmentalist to head the EPA.

It’s the same country that allows white nationalists in high positions of government—still in 2017.

It’s the same country that elected a grifter, a racist (fake) billionaire co artist that spent years attacking a sitting president, questioning his birth certificate (see also: things that racists do)...and whose only values are vengeance and money.

It’s the same country (no matter the political party) that bombs innocent civilians in foreign countries, and wonders why they hate us.

It’s the same country that started a war/ wars over fake evidence and sent thousands of our fellow citizens off to die.

It’s the same country that feels compassion for opioid users (white) but prosecutes to the full extent of the law crack addicts (black).

It’s the same country that has more prisoners in jail than the next seven countries combined.

It’s the same country that only 16 years ago legalized gay sex.

It’s the same country where half want to tell women what they can do with their own bodies.

It’s the same country that only 50 years ago legalized interracial marriage.

It’s the same country that practiced intense segregation for 100 years after slavery was declared illegal (and only after 600,000 Americans were killed).

It’s the same country that has innocent black boys rot in jail without a trial.

It’s the same country that sends white-collar criminals to country clubs rather than real jail, if they ever get convicted at all.

It’s the same country that pays women less and demands more in every aspect.

It’s the same country that has been told to demonize the poor.

It’s the same country where fake Christians try to take health care from anyone who can’t afford it and eagerly wish to destroy immigrant families.

It’s the same country whose leader told us to go shopping after 9/11.

It’s the same country that holds televangelists in higher regard than scientists.

It’s the same country where a reality star family has more influence than a senator.

It’s the same country, America; always the same country.

It’s the same country (no matter the political party) that bombs innocent civilians in foreign countries, and wonders why they hate us.

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It’s the same country, America; always has been and always will be.

We have zero moral superiority.

It can change.

Scott E., Greenwich Village,
continued on page 3
**West 12th Street Water Pipe Construction Victimize Residents**

Dear Mr. Capsis:

Firstly, many, many thanks for WestView News. It is a lifeline for West Villagers. I have lived in the townhouse my father bought, since 1946. He was a doctor, who needed to be near St. Vincent’s.

Currently, West 12th Street is being victimized by the City’s construction to replace water pipes. The pipes have to be repaired/replaced. We all understand that. However, two lines of tall (six-foot-high) metal fences have been installed, creating a corridor from the middle of the road to the south side of the sidewalk—the entire length of the street. At that location on West 12th Street, the fire hydrant access is totally blocked from both sides of the street and there is no access for emergency vehicles.

The south side of West 12th Street will have no curbside garbage pick-up for two to three months. It’s already piling up. There is no excuse for the metal fencing. I haven’t seen it on any of the other myriad construction sites, which have created havocs in the West Village.

Questions:

1. Do West 12th Street residents have the right to fast/safe fire hydrant access?
2. Do West 12th Street residents have the right to three garbage pick-ups per week that their taxes pay for?
3. Do West 12th Street residents have the right to reasonable access to their street and the ability to load/unload delivery/food? All of this has been denied for the foreseeable future—for two to three months.

Thank you for your service to this community.

—Alice Peterson

**Commemorating Playwright H. M. “Harry” Koutoukas on Christopher Street**

On Sunday, June 4th, a ceremony was held for the dedication of a bronze plaque celebrating the life of H. M. “Harry” Koutoukas at St. John’s Lutheran Church on Christopher Street. St. John’s Pastor Mark Erson blessed the plaque, which is now affixed to a tree well between 85 and 87 Christopher Street.

Harry was a poet, playwright, and legendary Greenwich Village bon vivant who lived at 87 Christopher Street for 50 years. His plays—which were performed at the Caffe Cino, La Mama, Judson Poet’s Theater, and many other venues—include: *Christopher at Sheridan Squared; Medea of the Laundromat; Only a Countess May Dance When She’s Crazy; The Man Who Shot His Washing Machine; Awful People Are Coming Over So We Must Be Pretending to Be Hard*. He was a poet, playwright, and legend.

**Canceled Outdoor Art Exhibit**

Dear Editors:

Can you please tell me who to contact regarding the cancelation of the Washington Square Outdoor Art Exhibit’s second weekend this month (one of its two days)—an 87-year-old show replaced by a sausage and tube sock street fair?

This exhibit showcases fine artists and craft artisans from around the New York metropolitan area, the nation, and the world. The fair runs along Washington Square’s east side and north along University Place to East 12th Street.

My friend, who has exhibited every year since the 1960s, received a call on June 2, 2017 from the director of the art show who confirmed that the show was canceled because the City “double booked.” Wouldn’t the art show have priority since it has been on the schedule for decades?

I am very sad about this and want to register a complaint. I am hoping that you can advise and possibly report on it. Thank you.

—C. Lichtenstein

**Surviving Greed and Indifference**

Dear Editors:

I am a big fan of your paper. While reading the May issue, I felt happy for Jessica Berk regarding her victory over the heartless people who own the building she lives in.

When my husband Bernard Pollack was no longer able to walk up the four flights to our apartment, I found another apartment for him at 95 Christopher Street. The rent was $5,400.00 per month. I signed a lease for another year, but my husband died on September 14, 2016. As you can imagine, I was in shock. The landlord demanded the full rent for the month he died. I威胁 to hold him in court and try to get his money back. I have been trying since then to get a refund, or another apartment, but he has been doing everything he can to prevent me from doing so.

Thank you for bringing this to our attention and directing us to your legal services.

—Alice Peterson

**Honoring Village Artists Lost to AIDS**

The Last Address Tribute Walk is an annual event that honors artists who lived with HIV and/or were lost to AIDS-related complications. The walk took place on June 3rd, after Ira Sachs’ nine-minute visual aids film Last Address (2010) was screened at the IFC Center at 3:00 p.m. that day. After emotional comments by the filmmaker, the audience, led by Alex Fialho of the arts organization Visual AIDS, walked to six West Village addresses where artists who contributed enormously to the West Village culture lived and worked.

If you missed this event, there is no need to wait until the 6th Annual Last Address Tribute Walk next June. You can complete the same walk, albeit without the touching, revealing, and sometimes raucous comments of those who were close to the artists. You can also see the film, which runs through October 22nd, at the Museum of the City of New York within the AIDS at Home exhibit.

Here’s the route: Ron Vawter and Cookie Mueller (285 Bleeker Street), Charles Ludlam (55 Morton Street), Hibicus (622 Greenwich Street), Marsha P. Johnson (Christopher Street Pier), and Barton Ladice Benes (56 Bethune Street at Westbeth Artists Housing).

More information on these remarkable artists and the 5th Annual Last Address Tribute Walk can be found at visualaids.org/events/detail/5th-annual-last-address-tribute-walk.

—Leslie Adatto

**Come See Vincent Livelli: The Greenwich Village Raconteur**

Join us for a special presentation by the storyteller of eras past, Vincent Livelli, on July 8th at 2:00pm at The Jefferson Market Library, in the Willa Cather Community Room.

Livelli’s unique lecture will be accompanied by a rare digital presentation provided by Henry Medina Jr., a private researcher who has interviewed and filmed Livelli for almost 25 years. Medina has documented his fascinating life as part of an ongoing oral history project.

A grand voyager and man-about-town, Livelli hosted and entertained countless celebrities, including: the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Anaïs Nin, Orson Welles, Marjorie Merriweather Post, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Sullivan, and Carmen Miranda. At 97, Livelli is still a valuable source of historical information and enjoys sharing his robust perspective.

This event is free and open to the public. To RSVP, email vincentlivelli@fastbookpress.com, or pick up the book entitled *H. M. Koutoukas Remembered by His Friends*.

—John Gilman

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Thank you for your service to this community.

—Alice Peterson

**H. M. “Harry” Koutoukas on Christopher Street**

On June 11, 2017 at 7:00 a.m., the Mount Sinai/Beth Israel Medical Center closed its Center for Labor and Birth (L&B), and they did not have New York State’s permission to do so.

To avoid having ambulances bring women in labor to the hospital, the hospital’s administrative staff must call the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system daily and confirm that Beth Israel is on diversion for L&B. According to the New York State Department of Health website, the hospital must request that ambulances divert patients to an alternate hospital facility. (Such requests may be honored by EMS providers.)

Mount Sinai has lied to its employees, the community, and now the state. If Mount Sinai will discontinue medical services, it must go through the proper channels and give advance notice to the state and local governmental agencies, as well as to non-governmental organizations such as the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Mount Sinai has an obligation to deliver quality care during this transition to full closure.

—Susan Anonymous

**BRIEFLY NOTED**

**Mount Sinai Continuing to Axe Medical Services**

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For more about H.M. “Harry” Koutoukas, contact info@fastbookpress.com, or pick up the book entitled *H. M. Koutoukas Remembered by His Friends*.

—John Gilman

www.westviewnews.org

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Helping Children Locally

By Peter Alson

In these mean times, it can be painful to think of the world into which we have brought our children. But it can also be inspiring to see how our children respond to hardships and what they do, together, to make the world a better place.

This spring, a small group of fifth graders from PS 41 set out to raise money for at-risk kids and families. On Saturday, June 24th, their efforts were realized from behind a table at the corner of 5th Avenue and 9th Street. There, they went about selling the colorful and inventive crafts they had spent the past few months creating, along with some baked goods and lemonade, to raise money for the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC).

Alessandra Vesi, the mother of sister and brother Cailli and Aly Jenkins, helped coordinate the project, lending her expertise as a professional designer. The group, comprised of her two kids, along with Eden Alson, Dot Lethridge, Sophie Wilks, and Eve Ramsdell Coleman (each 11 years old), created colorful wreaths, bags, lunch boxes, hair pins, baskets, and necklaces that they sold for prices ranging from $1.00 to $20.00.

“We wanted to help kids who might be in tough circumstances,” Eden Alson said. “And this seemed like a good way to do that.”

“It's easy to feel somewhat helpless in this age of Trump,” said Vesi, “especially in the face of enormous problems, like climate change, that would feel large even if everyone was banding together to fight them. But I think it helps to do good things on a local level, and that’s what we did. And I think that the kids were able to see in a very direct way that they had achieved something positive.”

In fact, after the day-long sale was complete, the five PS 41-ers had raised $711.00 for the NYSPCC; an additional $120.00 were raised through online donations.

“It's a good feeling knowing that we've done something good,” said Aly Jenkins. “And [we] plan to do it again.”

If you would like to help the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, donations may be mailed to 161 William Street, 9th Floor, or through the website at nyspcc.org.

St. Veronica's Church: Telling the Neighborhood Story

By Terri Cook

St. Veronica's, with its Gothic Revival and Victorian touches, was designed by local architect, John Deery, as a square sanctuary with a footprint of a classic Roman church. Since the interior was opened before the advent of electricity, original skylights still light the nave. The Divine Office occurs in旁 of the altars, and a stained-glass sky-light filters colorful light into the baptismal.”

It was a poor community; therefore, the congregation could not afford to renovate the sanctuary. They left gas jets on the back wall and hat hooks in the pews—a reminder of when men wore fedoras.

Golden marble columns contained faux finishes (scagliola) to resemble marble. Plaques from World War I, and the wars that followed, list the names of the boys who served and died in the armed forces, and identify the streets on which they lived. A two-tiered balcony reveals more neighborhood history. An upper tier once held St. Veronica's elementary school children who first attended a school located on Leroy Street in 1897. A new building was constructed by the parish in 1905 on Barrow and Washington Streets, and would graduate its last class in 1963. Today, it's the private Village Community School.

The balcony's lower tier, that used to accommodate the parishioners' overflow, is now the AIDS Memorial—a permanent remembrance of the time when AIDS was decimating the neighborhood's gay community, and nearby St. Vincent's Hospital was the neighborhood's epicenter. Visitors still drop by to read the plaques and remember their friends.

While the history of the waterfront still lives within these walls, St. Veronica's has also been the sanctuary of an Ecuadorian group and its patroness, Our Lady of Quinche (since 2005). This is the group's third home since its last eviction from St. Ann's Cathedral on East 12th Street, which was sold to New York University.

Since St. Veronica's is located within an historic district, the present congregation was sure that it would survive as a living sanctuary. However, on April 29, 2017, the group was surprised by a letter stating that the sanctuary was closing on June 25th, the day of the Gay Pride Parade.

A committee has been formed that will examine several options and write a financial plan to be submitted to the Archdiocese. Members welcome the community to join them in petitioning the Archdiocese to consider an alternative to locking up their living history book, as well as locating the group to the community from St. Veronica's Church.

Terri Cook is the author of Sacred Havens: A Guide to Manhattan's Spiritual Places; and Sacred Havens of Brooklyn: Spiritual Places and Peaceful Gardens. She was a member of St. Veronica's Church until the service schedule was reduced. Currently, Cook leads neighborhood tours through Manhattan and Brooklyn, Join Cook's mailing list by contacting her at tcouts@aol.com.
The Healthcare Conundrum

By Nan Victoria Munger

Consuming 17% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP), “medical costs are the tapeworm of American economic competitiveness,” says billionaire Warren Buffett. The U.S. spends more on health care than any other country. However, a 2014 report by The Commonwealth Fund compared the health care performance of the U.S. to that of 11 other developed countries and found that it ranked last. The Health Affairs journal reports that national health care expenditures are currently over $10,000 per person annually, and health care spending is outpacing GDP growth. The high costs of care are problematic for many Americans: 37% of those surveyed said that they had avoided recommended care or medication due to cost.

With the passage of the Affordable Care Act, or “Obamacare,” in 2010, all Americans became required to purchase health insurance or pay a tax penalty. Under Obamacare, an estimated 20 million people became insured by 2016, and increases in health care expenditure slowed. Many people complained that, under Obamacare, premiums and deductibles increased. Some Democrats, including Buffett, advocate a return to primary care practitioners and generate more income. She advocates a change in the way specialists relate to issues that could actually be addressed by primary care practitioners, all of whom would receive more training and higher salaries. Primary care practitioners would have to approve specialist referrals, preventing specialists from passing patients along to each other. Her proposal would also mandate the preemptive disclosure of procedures’ costs and strengthen the Independent Payment Advisory Board, which Obamacare created to provide oversight on price determinations.

Koufman’s commentary is part of the nationwide discussion on how to “fix” our broken system. Although she is correct in stating that specialists receive very high salaries and that drug costs are exorbitant, a large portion of health care expenditure is in hospital care. In 2015, hospital care comprised 32% of health care expenditures—more than physician and clinical services and prescription drugs combined (20% and 10%, respectively).

Rather than prescribing drugs and surgical procedures for health issues, perhaps we should focus on keeping people healthy in the first place. At present, many people go to the doctor only when something is seriously wrong with them. This behavior leads to more hospitalization and far higher health care expenditures. Furthermore, when physicians treat patients, they are much more likely to prescribe medical treatment than lifestyle changes. Koufman specializes in acid reflux, and she says that she sees many cases in which specialists have prescribed endoscopies, CT scans, and other procedures. However, the acid reflux could have been handled by primary care practitioners advocating “basic changes in diet, lifestyle, and sleep.” Primary care practitioners are in a position to encourage lifestyle changes not only to address patients’ existing problems, but to decrease the likelihood of future issues developing.

The problem is that lifestyle medicine and preventative care are not profitable. In his article, “Why I Had to Close My Preventative Healthcare Clinic,” published in The Atlantic on January 13, 2014, Steven Charlap recounts the story of MDPrevent, a health care clinic he created to help patients “identify their risk factors” for serious diseases and “help them make lifestyle changes to prevent these factors from evolving to illness.” The clinic succeeded in helping many patients lose weight without drugs or procedures, and “discontinued...patients’ statins [and] lowered or discontinued endoscopies, CT scans, and other procedures. However, the acid reflux could have been handled by primary care practitioners advocating “basic changes in diet, lifestyle, and sleep.” Primary care practitioners are in a position to encourage lifestyle changes not only to address patients’ existing problems, but to decrease the likelihood of future issues developing.

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Fresh Food for Seniors

By Andreea Ioana Pantor

On Tuesday, June 27th, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer announced the return of the Fresh Food for Seniors Program. This initiative began in 2012 when Brewer partnered with GrowNYC (an organization which utilizes environmental programs to improve quality of life), the NYC Department for the Aging, and over a dozen senior centers, to deliver fresh, affordable produce to seniors throughout the City.

Through the Fresh Food Program, seniors can purchase a grocery bag full of fresh, locally-grown fruits and vegetables (worth $12.00) for just $8.00 at participating senior centers and other sites throughout the City. Now, through November, seniors can sign up to receive the fresh produce twice a month in the West Village, Chelsea, Hell's Kitchen, the Upper West Side, and Roosevelt Island. Participants must register and pay a week in advance of the pick-up dates for each location.

Within the West Village, all seniors can access Council Member Corey Johnson's District Office, which is located at 224 West 30th Street, Suite 1206. At that location, seniors may sign up for the Fresh Food program on Mondays and Tuesdays. Additionally, senior center members may access the: Encore Senior Center, Greenwich House, Hudson Guild, SAGE Center: Midtown, VISIONS, and the Penn South Program for Seniors.

For more information on the Fresh Food for Seniors Program, please contact Shula Warren at swarren@manhattanbp.nyc.gov or (212) 669-2392.

“What, No Hellman’s?”

By George Capsis

Even I, the Publisher of WestView, am sometimes surprised by how good our contributors’ articles are. One of the best was Russell Neuman’s price comparison of Hellman’s Mayonnaise, which dramatizes the insane differences in food cost.

If you still have the June issue, I suggest you re-read the article. Russell discovered a 100% mark up between Hellman’s on the Jersey shore ($3.99) and in the West Village ($7.99).

There is something else you should know about Hellman’s—you can’t open a food store without it. hard-balled buyer would listen to your pitch with clenched teeth. He would then cut you short and tell you why your product had no chance in hell of going on their shelves.

But not with Mayoland Mayonnaise! To our utter astonishment, we were ushered into an executive office at Pathmark where a gaggle of svetle, high-level executives heard our pitch with supporting questions—we were with friends!

Finally, I asked why we had such a royal reception and the CEO calmly explained that Hellman’s had a virtual monopoly on mayonnaise. “You can’t open a supermarket without Hellman’s,” he calmly explained.

HELLMAN’S REAL MAYONNAISE:
PRICE PER OUNCE

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<th>Brooklyn Fare, Greenwich Street</th>
<th>D’Agostino’s, Greenwich Street</th>
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Some years ago, when European currencies had a dramatic fall against the dollar, I started International Market Development to offer market entry strategies for European companies who, at last, with cheap currencies, could break into the U.S. market. I found that most of my clients were family-owned French companies, one being Mayoland—perhaps the only factory in the dairy case and position it as a "fresh" product. Also, the packaging was poor.

I have asked our skilled Design and Production Manager to blow up the superbly-detailed price bar graph so we might better read it. (With the purchase of Whole Foods by Amazon, we may see a hybrid of cheap online buying with local availability.)

Again, I thank Russell for his excellent article and look forward to reading his next one.
A Village Bird on the Wire

By Jim Fouratt

There are secrets Greenwich Village holds that are whispered into ears about who and what is going on here. We want to share with you the topics being discussed locally.

Lulu Bank Street spotted me sitting in the unnamed park that was to have been the AIDS Memorial Park. Lulu came over, sat down, and asked me, “Do you see what’s going on over there? Do you see what’s happened in this tiny little park?” I looked up and saw what she was upset about. A group of men had taken the park’s chairs, moved them to the non-public garden space, and were disrupting the plant life so carefully planted. I said, “Yes, Lulu I see that.” Lulu looked around and then whispered in my ear, “They are dealing drugs. They sit there and people come and pick up drugs from them.” I looked back at the grouping and saw no traffic at the moment. But I knew that Lulu, who had lived here for a very long time, was not one to be easily outraged by behavior in Greenwich Village. I thanked her and made a note to watch to see if in fact what she suspected was true. Observing over a couple of days, I did see a number of people come and go from that spot. Some looked like messengers on bicycles. I wasn’t close enough to confirm exactly what was happening, but I understood why Lulu was suspicious.

Let’s talk about that park for a moment. The Rudin family, major real estate developers, had their eyes for years on the site that St. Vincent’s Hospital owned, to build luxury condos. They once had a plan to buy the land and relocate the hospital. They would apply for variances that would give them extra floors, more floors than St. Vincent’s had been given by variance on height because it was a medical facility. I am told that, after a backroom negotiation lunch led by then-Village City Council Member Christine Quinn and her friend and appointee to Community Board 2, Brad Hoylman, now New York State Senator and others, including District Leader Keen Berger (New York State Assemblywoman Deborah Glick’s protégé), Quinn negotiated that the Rudin family give to the City of New York the land across the street from the actual hospital to build a park and pay for it in exchange for the higher variance. It was to be turned over to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (Parks and Recreation) the day the Rudin family received the variance. But the Rudin family did not comply. It held on to the land so it could control the look of the park. By doing this, the Rudins avoided the public process of Parks and Recreation, which would have had a public hearing on the park’s design and naming.

When word got out that there was to be a new park, a group of gay men organized to demand that the park in fact be an AIDS Memorial Park. My understanding is that they envisioned a memorial for the thousands of men and women who had died of AIDS in New York City, many in the AIDS floors of St. Vincent’s. They also wanted to build an underground research library to educate the public about what exactly had happened here in Greenwich Village at St. Vincent’s Hospital during the pandemic. But there was opposition from some community members led by Marilyn Dorato, the Quinn-sponsored Executive Director of Greenwich Village’s Block Associations organization. Dorato insisted it be a children’s playground. Brad Hoylman, whose day job was legal counsel for the real estate industry lobbying group, intervened. He was in favor of the AIDS memorial plan and placated Dorato by saying that there would be no research center.

The AIDS Memorial Group then sponsored a worldwide design competition for the AIDS Memorial. It became clear that, with the Rudin family still in control of the design, the park land had not been turned over to the City. They came in with a design placing the memorial on the farthest end of the park. When construction began, the land had still not been turned over to Parks and Recreation, so the department could not provide input. Within public procedures, the AIDS Memorial Group began fundraising to pay for the monument; over $6 million were raised by the completely volunteer-based group. When the Rudin park was about to open, the family rejected the name ‘AIDS Memorial Park’ and renamed it ‘St. Vincent’s AIDS Memorial Park’ and placed signage reflecting that.

New York City Council Member, Corey Johnson, two days before the scheduled opening, raised holy hell. Word got out about the name change and Tova 11th Street, who had been active in the Committee to Save St. Vincent’s, proposed that a plaque be placed on the condo building stating: “On this land was a hospital that served the public regardless of economic ability to pay. It was called St. Vincent’s Hospital.” This was rejected. Last I heard, the land was still in the Rudin name and no final park name had been settled on.

Just one more Village intrigue. Stay tuned. Tips? Send them to villagebird.on.the.Wire@gmail.com.

Healthcare continued from page 5

services. Patients, accustomed to receiving panaacea prescriptions or supplements, were also skeptical of MDPatient’s approach. The clinic closed in December of 2013.

The cost structure of our current health care system is built around treating dis-ease, not preventing it. Preventative care could save money on hospitalizations, prescriptions, emergency care, and specialist doctor visits, but only if the public and insurance companies are willing to give it a chance.
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Letters continued from page 3

years of around-the-clock caregivers had been required, we’d seen our life-savings go down the drain. But the building management has been ruthless in holding me to the lease. I’ve written them several nice letters asking them to show some humanity, but their answer has always been “No.” They knew that my husband had Alzheimer’s and died of cancer, but they only cared about getting their money. Several people advised that I stop paying rent to the building, so I haven’t paid any since February. The lease expires at the end of May. The management is holding $21,400.00 in security that I would like to get back. I would settle for half of that amount—which would be better than nothing. Do you think Mr. Schwartz would be interested in helping me?

On December 23, 2016, we lost gas access in the building where I live. We are still waiting for Con Edison to turn the gas back on, even though a plumber fixed the leak several months ago.

About four weeks ago, my phone stopped working. Verizon repairmen came and told me that they don’t repair the old boxes outside, that a box would be installed in my apartment, and that the new system would end the trouble with my phone. I told the two men that whatever they planned to do, they must not lose the voicemail greeting on my phone because it was the voice of my late husband. They assured me that wouldn’t happen, but it did. I lost what was a daily comfort to me—hearing my husband’s voice on the voicemail. I am no longer with Verizon.

If you take a long look at what is happening here—with Con Edison, Verizon, hospitals closing, and more—it’s beyond scary. Thanks for listening. —Beulah Pollock

Reflecting on Gardens and Housing

Dear Editors:

In writing about and photographing the gardens at the Church of St. Luke in the Fields and Jane Street, Justin Matthews touches on two gardens where I have worked as a volunteer with great joy and love for over 40 years. (See his article “Parks and Gardens of the West Village” in the June 2017 issue of WestView.)

When Jack Siman was head gardener of the St. Luke in the Fields Garden in the mid-1970s, he gave me a small black oak in a bucket to bring to Saugerties, New York. It now stands over 30 feet high. Justin is right on when he laments the somewhat severe curvilinear path in the Jane Street Garden, which replaced the more natural, stone meandering walk that I had laid. The new five-foot-wide smooth, steel-edged path was required by the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, owner of the garden, as a condition for a new cast-iron picket fence to be installed later this year; it will be similar to the one at Abingdon Square. At least they compromised in accepting a stone dust, rather than asphalt, surface.

In the same issue of WestView, Alec Pruchnicki, in promoting affordable housing which everyone supports, falls into the same trap that the mayor has—that housing must replace community gardens, when both are needed. Seniors cannot normally walk five blocks and have no use for “handball courts, athletic fields, playgrounds” and basketball hoops. They take joy and pleasure in the lawns and flowers carefully developed and tended by volunteers over many years; such greenery would be destroyed by this either/or policy. Furthermore, zoning law requires usable and accessible open space to be adjacent to new housing. The City must pay fair land costs and not steal gardens from the communities.

—Barry Benepe

Dear Mr. Capis:

It was very nice to speak with you.

We are excited about the new school at 75 Morton Street, and understand from the principal, Jacqui Getza, that it may not be named The Jane Jacobs School. No reason was given. The decision was not 100% confirmed but it didn’t sound hopeful. Do you know someone who can provide insight on this?

I had read that the school would be named after Jane Jacobs, according to the March 8, 2017 DNAinfo article, entitled “Name New West Village School After Jane Jacobs, Preservationists Urge City.” Only one section of the West Village—Hudson Street between West 11th and Perry Streets—carries the name of Jane Jacobs, who almost single-handedly prevented a highway from plowing through the Village.

The new school is being housed temporarily in the Clinton School on East 15th Street for the first year and will move to 75 Morton Street the following year.

—Anonymous

Thanks for your question, Anonymous. I am sending your letter to Erik Botscher, the Chief of Staff for Council Member Corey Johnson, who will get the answer for you. I think that the new school should be named The Jane Jacobs School.

—George Capitis

Correction

The caption for Tom Lamia’s “Notes and Perspectives from Away” column within the June issue is incorrect. The photo is of the bridge and bridge house in South Bristol, Maine, not the Town Hall.
The City Club Speaks

By Michael Gruen

Resistance to Diller Island (Pier 55) has come from some key figures in the famed City Club of New York (they helped to save Grand Central Station). Here, the President of the Club, Michael Gruen, returns to the original charter of the Hudson River Park, which calls for the assiduous preservation of the natural life of the Hudson estuary. He argues that a 2.7-acre concrete island suspended above the breeding and feeding ground of local aquatic life would alter and diminish them.

The Hudson River Park Trust and Pier 55 Inc. have definitively withdrawn their appeal from the decision of Judge Lorna Schofield’s decision (March 23, 2017), voiding the Army Corps of Engineers’ permit for construction of Pier 55. While that does not end the battle over Pier 55, it does dramatically change the battlefield.

Judge Schofield ruled that the New York State Legislature’s designation of the water section of the Park as an “estuarine sanctuary” is not empty verbiage, as the Trust and Pier 555 have argued, but a solemn deduction imposing on the Trust a duty to treat and manage the water section as, above all, a conservation area for the preservation and use of the water resources. Withdrawal of the appeal makes the Judge’s determination the definitive law of the case. Her reasoning is impeccable, so the Trust would presumably feel obligated to comply with it in future actions it takes with respect to the water section. A primary consideration in future actions should be whether the action will, to any extent, impair the use of the water section for conservation purposes.

Judge Schofield further ruled that the area’s status as an “estuarine sanctuary” also establishes it as a “special aquatic site” under the Federal Clean Water Act. Such a site is entitled to heightened protection under that Act. The Army Corps of Engineers did issue a new permit on May 30th based on the Trust having changed plans for the island, presenting concrete pilings rather than hollow pilings filled, after having been driven with flowable concrete. On that basis, the Corps ruled that the project does not involve “fill,” and that, in the absence of “fill,” the Corps has no authority to stop the project under the Clean Water Act. Plaintiffs intend to challenge that ruling if the project goes forward. At this time, the project appears to be in abeyance.

Plaintiffs in the series of cases concerning Pier 55 are The City Club of New York, Tom Fox, and Rob Buchanan. They are represented by Emery, Celii, Brinkckerhoff & Abady, LLP.

The City Club of New York is an independent nonprofit organization based in New York, which is dedicated to civic advocacy. Its members have advocated for New Yorkers on various issues including, most recently, preventing the construction of a shopping mall in Flushing Meadows Corona Park and downsizing the up-zoning of East Midtown.

Justified Outrage Against Verizon

By Ellis Nassour

I recently came across a Verizon internet ad, which states: Ready for your free HBO NOW trial? One month FREE trial. All you need is your internet. Even my internet.

Jump forward to the massive outages the New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman was convinced that Verizon Communications had abandoned quality service. The New York Public Service Commission was in good shape compared to downtown.”

Schneiderman blasted the state’s largest landline provider for both occurrences. Visions of “lightning” and “so far.”

One of the biggest problems we have in New York State politics is that members of the legislature rarely have opponents. That may just be the reason: (a) that we have a do-nothing legislature, and (b) why over 15 members of the Assembly and Senate, including top leadership (i.e., Shelly Silver) have gone to jail over the last 10 years.

The VID should support contested elections. A fundamental premise of reform is to make it easier to run for office and to oppose the notion that an elected position is a life appointment. The VID should support term limits, like we have in New York City. (Did it hurt that Corey Johnson replaced Christine Quinn?) The VID should also respect those—like me—who believe in open democracy.

By Arthur Schwartz

The VID has often featured reports on the most recent meetings of the Village Independent Democrats (VID), one of the City’s oldest “reform” clubs.

This past May, the VID voted to endorse an array of candidates, including Bill de Blasio, Corey Johnson, and City Council hopeful Carlina Rivera in the district east of 5th Avenue.

However, the VID did not endorse me for Democratic District Leader. Why? Because, when I quit my campaign for the New York State Assembly last July, although Deborah Glick, I gave my line to Jim Fouratt—a WestView contributor who is a long-term activist member of the VID. Jim actually got 25% of the vote running a shoestring campaign, but many VID folks were furious that Deborah Glick had to run against an opponent.

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West Village Original:
David Greenspan

By Michael D. Minichiello

This month’s West Village Original is playwright and actor David Greenspan, born in Los Angeles in 1956. The author of such plays as: She Stoops to Comedy; Go Back to Where You Are; The Patry (he also performed in the latter two); and I’m Looking for Helen Twelvetrees; Greenspan is also the recipient of numerous fellowships. He has won five Obie Awards, including one in 2010 for Sustained Achievement. He lives in Westbeth with his long-time partner, painter William Kennon.

When actor and playwright David Greenspan was a boy growing up in Los Angeles, he would tune into a local radio show called Broadway Showtime. “They used to broadcast Broadway musicals, and my father—an aerospace engineer—would record them on his reel-to-reel,” he recalls. “I fell in love with them and began checking out other musicals from the library. That was my initial interest in theater. Then I started acting in plays in high school and that’s when I determined I was going to go away to both study and act in theater.”

“Away” was New York, and—after earning a degree in drama at UC Irvine—Greenspan came here in 1978. “I acted in a few plays Off-Off Broadway in theaters that no longer exist,” he says. “At a certain point, I started making notes in my journal. Those turned into monologues, which I began to perform. This was when I really began to develop as a writer and performer in my own plays. At that time, I was also doing a little directing. I did a play by Kathleen Tolan that Joe Papp subsequently brought to the Public Theater. The result was that he put me in residence as a director there in 1989.”

“[Joe] was a remarkable guy,” Greenspan continues. “He gave me a big opportunity to work before a larger audience. He was very generous to me and I have such fond memories of him. I didn’t know him nearly as long as many other people but the time I did was memorable.”

Does Greenspan have a preference for either acting or writing? “Not really,” he admits. “Acting and writing are both creative activities. I also like all aspects of the theater: writing plays, performing in my plays, and acting in other people’s plays. I love working with other playwrights. I consider them colleagues and it’s a lot of fun to be a part of their vision.”

Speaking of life as an actor in New York, Greenspan says, “It’s had its ups and downs, both financially and opportunity-wise. I’ve had a good run of it over the last 15 years, though. It’s very rewarding, not only the work but also being part of a larger community. That’s a wonderful thing. I have relationships with many actors and directors whom I consider friends. Admittedly, there were a couple of self-indulgent moments when I thought of giving it up. But that was in the past. And that only makes sense if you really, really feel you want to do something else!”

After living together in Jersey City for 15 years, Greenspan and his partner moved into Westbeth in 1999. “We were on a list for 10 years before we got in,” he says. “We wanted to live in Manhattan and this was the only affordable way to do it. When it finally happened I couldn’t believe we were actually living in the West Village. We love it here! We love the building and the sense of community. We got here just before they started renovating the riverfront, and once that was complete it made it even better. It’s heaven being here.”

So the move to New York was a good one? “Yes, it was,” Greenspan admits. “When I was young, all the TV shows were set in New York and, of course, this was the place for theater. So while there was a point in my life when I had a choice to stay in Los Angeles, it really wasn’t a contest. I had always dreamed of coming here and, fortunately, my career has kept me here. Oddly enough, though, my father has never seen me perform in New York. He’s still alive, though. He’s 99. So maybe he will see me yet!”

Michael D. Minichiello, a long-time resident of the West Village, has been writing the “West Village Originals” column for WestView News since 2008. He enjoys highlighting the West Village residents and business owners who discuss their lives, careers, and the vast changes that have taken place in the neighborhood over the past decade.
By Andrew Buemi

The New York City of the 1970s, for many, represents some of the grimiest and grittiest times in the City’s modern history. The period brought economic uncertainty, increasing crime, and suburban flight. Yet, it was a time when fledgling creatives could still afford to live in Manhattan and burgeoning artists, activists, musicians, and writers came into their own before the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic.

The era conjures up eminent artists and provocateurs associated with downtown bohemia, punk, and radical thinking, including: Patti Smith, Robert Mapplethorpe, Peter Hujar, Andy Warhol, Fran Lebowitz, and Susan Sontag, to name a few. What is not as widely explored is the debauchery of the uptown crowd.

In her debut autobiographical novel, Blue Money, Janet Capron takes us on a booze-fueled, pill-popping, line-snorting journey from her upbringing as a native Upper East Side debutante turned prostitute during the 1970s. As an only child, Janet was raised by her single mother, Maggie, and several live-in maids on Park Avenue. While the two were supported by her wealthy grandfather, the book chronicles the period in Capron’s life in which she seemed most vulnerable, from a sense of having failed to capture the validation of her absent father, Rayfield.

In the book, Capron’s hangout of choice is the Traveling Medicine Show, a seedy Second Avenue bar where she develops a taste for crystal meth and one of the bar’s frequent patrons, Michael, with whom she would carry on a tumultuous love affair throughout the years.

Through Michael, Capron met a madam named Corrine, who set her up with her first trick and introduced her to “the Life,” a self-awareness that is both darkly comic and jarringly wry. While she justifies her pursuits with the age of radical feminism, sexual liberation, and a yearning to be financially self-sufficient, Capron makes no attempt to disguise how her troubled childhood drove her to substance abuse and the pursuit of male affection at any cost.

In a poignant vignette encapsulating a sense of abandonment and rejection, Capron recounts driving upstate to her father’s stable as a child:

“We are absolutely silent the whole time. He is shifting gears in his little Carmenegia and simply delighting in the drive. It never occurs to him that maybe his daughter next to him is feeling one long howling pain of rejection. Is it feeling that he has so little interest in her that, like a parcel, like a Sunday burden, is being driven up to the stable and put on a horse because she is an obligation he now too sober to avoid.”

Capron’s writing is at once fast-paced, witty, humorous, and dark. She constructs the book using short chapters that each explore poignant moments during this period in her life. We follow her as she moves in and out of her mother’s Park Avenue apartment (and through the complicated relationship therein); suffers terrible withdrawals; is committed to a psychiatric institution; performs in a sex show; and gets married, divorced, and takes on new lovers that lead to horrible acts of violence. In doing so, Capron introduces a colorful cast of characters throughout New York City’s underbelly, from Sutton Place to the West Village.

Blue Money is not for the dainty or faint of heart, but it’s a worthwhile read for those who have lived through the 1970s of New York City (and even those who have not, like me). For all the grit, violence, and misery attached to the City during this decade, it’s my sense that today there is a sort of nostalgia for the naiveté and the camaraderie of those who came up in that hardcrable era.

By Nan Victoria Munger

In 1979, Afghan millionaire Abdul Nusrat fled the communist government of Afghanistan, leaving behind his four cars and a 180-worker jewel factory to become a West Village storeowner. Since moving to New York and opening Nusrati Afghan Imports, Nusrat has twice been forced to relocate, not by Communists, but by landlords.

In 2008, Nusrat’s landlord informed him that the monthly rent for Nusrat’s Bleecker Street store would be increasing from $7,000 to $45,000 per month. “He [said] forty-five thousand—I thought he [was] joking!” says Nusrat, whose store had been in that location for 32 years. Unable to pay the higher rent, Nusrat was forced to move. A Brooks Brothers moved into his space.

The shift from independent shops to major fashion chains was common for Bleecker Street in the early 2000s. Once a nexus of West Village family businesses, Bleecker Street between 8th Avenue and Christopher Street became a tourist trap of high-end fashion stores like Marc Jacobs, Ralph Lauren, and Burberry.

“Bleecker Street is not anymore Bleecker Street,” says Nusrat. Before, small shops were family-owned, and “people [came] here to see the family in [the] West Village. Now there’s no family.”

Nusrati Afghan Imports, now at 85 Christopher Street, is a remnant of the old Bleecker Street. The store is narrow, smells faintly of cigar smoke, and is pleasantly crowded with fascinating items from all over the world. The walls are hung with trinkets and rugs, and shelves are piled with statuettes, jewelry, and books.

Nusrat has a dedicated clientele, many of whom are antique collectors. Sculptor John Seward Johnson, Jr. is a loyal customer who stops by “every time he is in New York,” says Nusrat fondly. If business is slow, Nusrat alters his inventory to meet client demand: “I bring pieces that people like.”

 Meanwhile, the fashion stores that drove Nusrat off Bleecker Street have been closing, leaving behind darkened windows pasted with ‘For Lease’ signs. Although these outlets sell clothing items for thousands of dollars, many stores have still been unable to pay the astronomical rents. There are currently 15 empty stores, and two more are about to close.

The flurry of closings has made Bleecker Street less of a shopper’s destination. “I was here last year and the year before,” says a Burberry salesman, “and there’s definitely less traffic.” At Burberry, sleek black shelves hold stiff purses; a raincoat costs $2,000. Next door, a flat-screen television displays models walking the runway. A saleswoman commented that if it were up to her, she would not renew the lease. “We love this neighborhood, but business is not good for us,” she said.

Next door, however, business is brisk. Sunni Spencer opened Après Sea on March 30th. “I was just going to be an April pop-up,” says Spencer, “but because the response was so good, I stayed.” Located at 371 Bleecker Street (between Perry and Charles Streets), Après Sea sells all things beach, from bathing suits to ocean-scented candles. The store smells fresh and tropical, distinctly non-New York. Beachy music and palm fronds create a vacation-like ambiance.

Customers love the feel of Après Sea, but the biggest selling point is Spencer herself. Spencer has 19 years of retail experience, and she says Après Sea is “a combination of all my experience and all my talents.”

Spaying a customer trying on a white dress, she calls enthusiastically, “I love that dress! It shows just enough leg.” Customers like Spencer’s energy. She has a small notebook in which customers leave comments. One reads, “You and your gorgeous store would be lowered. “Under this law and landlords,” says Nusraty, “[there is] no hope. Nobody can pay that kind of money.” With lowered rents, however, more personalized, experience-based stores like Après Sea could pop up. The liveliness of Après Sea shows that Bleecker Street is not dead—it just needs a breath of fresh air.
Second Act

By Eileen Millan

After a fairly successful career as an executive assistant and artist, I was able to buy my co-op apartment 20 years ago. As you all know, times have changed and we never know what life will bring us. This is the story of my second act.

I had just retired and was painting up a storm; I had an art dealer handle my work and also some sold-out gallery shows for my “Mr. Big Ears” watercolor paintings. I had even managed to talk the Starbucks on Union Square into taking down their coffee bean posters and replacing them with the work of local artists.

Then, back in 2008, I thought I was on top of the world. But, like the stock market, my life crashed and burned. I was diagnosed with thyroid cancer, not just once, but twice. Within a few years, I lost seven friends and family members—my world came to an end. I put my brush down and packed up my paints. I was also in need of money and was living off of my savings—I had to sell all of my jewelry and antiques for extra cash.

This continued for years. I just couldn’t come to grips with all the losses and health issues I was battling. A few years later, I had an accident and was on disability (my arm was out of commission); with that accident I received a small settlement to help me get back on track. Well, with darkness comes light, and just one small token of kindness and creativity helped me get back on track.

It was my friend’s 65th birthday and I wanted to do something nice for her. So, I went to the top of my closet where I had stashed my art supplies and picked up my brush again. I made her a special hand-painted birthday card and a small painting. To say the least, she was so touched and taken aback that I was actually painting again and had done this for her.

She loved it so much that she framed it. When she had friends and family over, they inquired as to where she had gotten the painting and card. That was my “ah-ha!” moment—I had to get back to painting.

This time, I decided to focus on making greeting cards. From then on it was full-speed ahead. To date, I have had three art shows in my co-op’s board room and have sold over 150 hand-painted and collage greeting cards. I work out of my studio apartment and have turned my shopping cart into a store on wheels, which I take to my customers’ apartments.

Eileen Millan can be reached via email at millan77@aol.com. Please put “greeting cards” into the subject line for a speedy response.
Out and About

By Keith Michael

June, July, and August are when my exhausted academic schedules get crammed into binders for the summer and I get out! Yes, I love the West Village—my morning, afternoon, and evening walks with Millie circumnavigating her corgi-friendly blocks continue to delight me with their sights. But, give me a map to unfold and a subway or bus to rush to, and off to pursue avian surprises I go. Not a contented traveler, Millie prefers to spend her summers scrolling down her Facebook page under the air conditioner while daintily sipping a Pimm’s. What could be more Thoroughly Modern? This stay-at-home-girl predilection leaves me without guilt as I venture forth toward the wilds of NYC.

Of course, one doesn’t need to travel to other boroughs for great birds. Right in Hudson River Park, sleek flocks of Cedar Waxwings feed youngsters, Mallards swim by with parades of attentive ducklings gleaning snacks along the river wall, our usually-to-be-ignored pigeons get entertained on the late-season fermented Juneberries, and Fish Crows harass the ever-vocal Blue Jays. (By the way, Fish Crows look exactly like Common Crows, except that when they call out they have a distinctly nasal uh-uh rather than the more familiar full-throated caw-caw-caw.) Without even going near the river, Mockingbirds wake up the neighborhood with moonstruck ramblings about their latest identity crisis, Robins try out new variations on their same old tunes in the cherry tree at Charles and Greenwhich Streets, and sparrows and starlings gossip on street corners as usual. You might even be lucky enough to see a handsome blue-and-orange Kestral-fellow scoping out the best new neighborhood lunch spot from a rooftop.

But, ah, what wonders there are to be seen at the ends of the subway lines! Maybe a Great Horned Owl nest at the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx or Green-Wood Cemetery (shh) catches your fancy. What about Barn Swallows’ exquisite mud-nest architecture under the bridges of Prospect Park? (We do have Barn Swallows here too, but get thee to Brooklyn.) There are long-limbed egrets and herons galore almost anywhere there is fresh water though I’ve seen them dashing through salt water along the coast as well. There are feisty green-and-gray Monk Parakeets in many neighborhoods of Queens and Brooklyn (the A train to Howard Beach is a great day-trip to see their condo stick nests). Take the American Princess Whale and Dolphin Watch cruise out of Riis Landing, Queens for a hit of Wilson’s Storm Petrels—how these white-rumped starling-sized aerialists survive most of their lives swooping and foot-patterning over the ocean waves is a mystery. Oh yeah, and seeing humpbacked whales and dolphins cavorting with the New York skyline in the distance is cool, too.

I’ll confess, though, that two of my summer favorites are the Bald Eagles of Staten Island and the Piping Plovers of Breezy Point. Since Vito and Linda produced two eaglets last summer, they are the glamour couple of the City. Head out to Mount Loretto Unique Area (take the Staten Island Ferry and the Staten Island Railway (SIR) to Richmond Valley), have lunch on the beach in the shade of the light tower, and wait. Vito is soon likely to fly in and hold court.

Don’t tell Millie, but Piping Plover chicks are nearly unbearably cute. Unlike plumpish corgis, they seem to be all legs and can run remarkably fast. Their parents are fiercely protective and are no slouches for cuteness themselves. Piping Plovers have the added bittersweet cache of being seriously endangered because they like to summer on the same beaches as people. Seeing a surviving family feels like a possibly once-in-a-lifetime experience. If you’re not up to the trek all of the way out to Breezy Point, though I seriously recommend it, Fort Tilden usually has a few nesting couples as well (take the 2 Train to Brooklyn College and then the Q35 Bus to Fort Tilden).

I’m starting to get the twinge that I’ve been out and about too long. It’s close to Millie’s dinnertime. Home again, home again, jiggity-jog.

For more information about NYC nature outings, birding, photographs, and books, visit keithmichaelnyc.com.

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As I suggested last month, Maine has sent more than its share of respected political personages to the national stage—to the U.S. Senate in particular. Former Senators include: Margaret Chase Smith, Edmund Muskie, William Cohen, George Mitchell, and Olympia Snowe. They distinguished themselves and their home state by principles, effective leadership within the Senate and beyond. Two, Smith (R) and Muskie (D), ran for President. Cohen (R) and Mitchell (D) served in national and international capacities and are well respected by their fellow legislators.

But this column is not about any of them, nor is it about dispasionate, high-minded state and national government service. This is about a troubling reflection in Maine politics of the class struggle and negative emotion that now have a firm hold on our country.

Near me, in the twin villages of Newcastle and Damariscotta, Frances Perkins is revered. The Perkins house on the river in Newcastle was built in the mid-18th century and has been occupied by the Perkins family ever since. The Frances Perkins Center in Damariscotta is an active local cultural center. Visitor tours of the Newcastle house and of the family cemetery plot (where Frances is buried alongside her husband) are conducted in the summer months.

Before Franklin Roosevelt was a four-term President, he was Governor of New York. He succeeded Al Smith, who had served four terms in that office. Smith ran for President in 1928 and lost, which ended his political career. In 1918 (before women could vote), Governor Smith appointed Frances Perkins to the state’s Industrial Commissioner in 1928. After his election as President in 1932, Roosevelt asked Perkins to be his Secretary of Labor.

Perkins said she would serve, and become the first woman ever of cabinet rank, only if Roosevelt agreed, in writing, to pursue a list of policy objectives that became the basis for the New Deal: a 40-hour work week, a minimum wage, unemployment compensation, worker’s compensation, abolition of child labor, federal aid to the states for unemployment relief, Social Security, a new federal employment service, and universal health insurance. He agreed. When she left the cabinet in June 1945, only one of the objectives remained undone: universal health insurance. That one is still a work in progress.

Until March of 2011, Frances Perkins and other Maine labor notables, including World War II icon ‘Rosie the Riveter,’ were celebrated in a 36-foot-long mural bolted to a wall in the Maine Department of Labor Building. (Rosie was a wartime employee at Bath Iron Works).

In 2011, a new breed of politician, Governor Paul LePage, ordered the mural removed after just two months in office. Two weeks later, the mural was gone and a public outcry began. The Governor defended his action, noting that “some business owners” had complained. After some delay, a single letter, addressed to the Governor was offered in support: “Welcome to Augusta. You are doing a great job. Keep it up.” Then the writer expresses “disbelief” that the mural includes “a figure which closely resembles the former Commissioner of Labor [Perkins]” and asserts that it is “nothing but propaganda.” Finally, the fully-capitalized demand: “MR. LEPAGE, PLEASE TEAR DOWN THIS MURAL,” is followed by a reassuring “Keep up the good work. [Signed,] A Secret Admirer.”

Does this sound familiar? The effusive praise, the “fake news” reference to propaganda? The apparent premise that government takes sides (the mural was said to be inconsistent with Maine’s “pro-business” policies)? All of this gives new meaning to “Moxie” in Maine: not just a soft drink, but a communication technique as well. Even the unavoidable thought that the anonymous author of the letter could be the addressee himself comes to mind. Conclusion: It is not possible to escape the Governor’s action, noting that “some business owners” had complained. After some delay, a single letter, addressed to the Governor was offered in support: “Welcome to Augusta. You are doing a great job. Keep it up.” Then the writer expresses “disbelief” that the mural includes “a figure which closely resembles the former Commissioner of Labor [Perkins]” and asserts that it is “nothing but propaganda.” Finally, the fully-capitalized demand: “MR. LEPAGE, PLEASE TEAR DOWN THIS MURAL,” is followed by a reassuring “Keep up the good work. [Signed,] A Secret Admirer.”
June seems to be a popular time for openings. Last year, we counted 12 new spots, this year seven. We were happy to see a small, independent antique store open on 7th Avenue. Two big name restaurants started service this month as well. High rents were cited again as a reason for restaurant closure. The most dramatic news this month was the fire, which broke out above the ceiling at Tavo (at 615 Hudson Street, between Jane and West 12th Streets) during the NYC Pride Parade. The Daily News reported that 12 firefighters were injured battling the blaze, which took over two hours to extinguish. The restaurant is temporarily closed, and Tavo’s Facebook page has the following update: “Just know that Tavo will reopen its doors very soon and is looking forward to seeing you all where we do.”

Open

1. **TYME Fast Food** (Gansevoort Market – 353 West 14th Street, near 9th Avenue): This tiny stand near the entrance to the food court, from the team behind The Fat Radish, offers meals in jars, a similar concept to Ancolie on 8th Street except that these jars are plastic, not glass. Each jar has four to six layers of what are described as healthy foods, usually a combination of grains, beans/pulses, and vegetables, some raw and some cooked. The jars sell for $10.00 but you can get $1.00 off your next purchase by returning the jar. More locations are coming to NYC later this year.

2. **E.A.K. Ramen** (469 6th Avenue, near 11th Street): In the old Kin Shop space, E.A.K. Ramen, with the tagline “But First, Ramen,” showcases the IEKI style of ramen. In Japan, the company has over 400 stores, with more in other parts of Asia. They are now spreading the IEKI gospel in the U.S. with two restaurants, the other in L.A. The ramen comes with a broth made of chicken and pork. The noodles are short, fat, and straight, and the toppings include spinach and a large piece of Nori, which is embossed with the name of the restaurant and a picture of a bowl of ramen. I tried the Oh So Hot ramen and the Spicy Fried Rice, both delicious. Interesting ramen facts are displayed on signs around the restaurant. A few days after the grand opening, the restaurant was shut down by the NYC Department of Health, but after a week or so of construction, it has reopened.

3. **Fatbird Southern Kitchen and Bar** (44 9th Avenue, at 14th Street): When The Diner closed at 14th Street and 9th Avenue, the space did not stay empty for long. After a period of renovations, Fatbird, a southern-inspired restaurant from Iron Chef Cat Cora, has opened in that space. Eater's Robert Sietsema filed an unusual harsh review, complaining about everything from the sugary drinks to the flavorless chicken, to the general disarray in a list of 11 things that went wrong during his dinner there. He did enjoy the biscuits, so I ordered one at the biscuit bar, and while it was good (my daughter said it was the best biscuit she’d had), the transaction took forever. They first had to go downstairs to get the biscuit, then I was overcharged, and finally the cashier could not figure out how to give me any change. I hope they can recover as the spot is lovely with its cheerful outdoor terrace. Other than the newly opened 33 Greenwich, there are not many spots for southern food in the neighborhood.

4. **Red Hen** (237 West 14th Street, between 7th and 8th Avenues): The folks at The Crooked Knife across the street decided that the neighborhood needed a high-quality sandwich shop. So, when this location became available, they opened Red Hen. The Signature Sandwiches span the globe with ingredients such as crispy pork belly, Greek lamb meatballs, and falafel. The gigantic breakfast sandwiches, served from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. are a great deal at $8.00 and range from The Health Freak to The Beast.

5. **The Upper Rust** (143 7th Avenue South, at Charles Street): We so often see stores closing in the West Village because of high rents that it is a nice change to see a store arrive in the West Village because of high rents elsewhere. The Upper Rust, the antique and curio shop which had been at East 9th Street and Avenue A for about 14 years, left that location when their lease ran out. After a brief stint in Chelsea, they landed on 7th Avenue South. It is a charming store, of the type that used to populate Bleecker Street in the 1980s. We hope that they are successful here.

6. **Emily** (35 Downing Street, at Bedford Street): Into the old Blue Ribbon Bakery space comes a branch of the popular Brooklyn pizzeria, Emily. At the West Village location, the pizzas come in two styles—a round New York pie cooked in the wood-fired oven and a square Detroit-Grandma pie that has an oilier and more substantial crust. The square pies come in four “colors,” some traditional and some unusual. The spectacular Grammy pie was reminiscent of a pizza della nonna; the sausage and Calabrian chilis were a wonderful addition. In Brooklyn, the Hylands, owners of Emily, have two restaurants—Emily and Emmy Squared. It was widely reported in the press that the West Village location would be an Emmy Squared, but this turned out not to be the case. One possible explanation was provided by the New York Post, which reported that the Hylands are being sued by their Emmy Squared investors who claim, among other things, that they were shut out of the Manhattan expansion. The Hylands deny this and all other allegations in the suit.
Ms. Mi’s Hot Pot (3 West 14th Street, near 5th Avenue): Ms. Mi’s Hot Pot comes to the Village from Lanzhou, China, at a time when hot pot restaurants seem to be popping up all over the place. The nutron-based broth can be ordered in either Chinese Herbal or Szechuan Hot & Spicy form. The hot pots are customizable with vegetables, noodles, and meats, some common and some not so common (such as cattle tail, lamb stomach, beef tripe, and special high calcium meat). Four kinds of tofu are also available.

Closed

After six years of service, Monument Lane (103 Greenwich Avenue, at West 12th Street) has closed its doors. While it never seemed that full when it opened, more recently there was often a lively crowd in the evenings. Like Good, a block away, which closed last month; it will be missed by locals. Bespoke Kitchen (615 ½ Hudson, between Jane and West 12th Streets) is also gone. It was one of my favorites, but it had a string of bad luck which finally forced it to close. According to one of the owners, because of a gas upgrade in the building, there was no gas in the restaurant when it opened. The owners were in the process of applying for gas when a flood closed the restaurant for three months last August. During the repairs, a second flood occurred. Finally, the restaurant reopened in November but, due to the $20,000 per month expenses, the restaurant was closed), unexpected expenses, and fewer patrons, the restaurant struggled financially and finally had to close. 2nd Time Around (17 Greenwich Avenue, between West 10th and Christopher Streets), the nationwide consignment shop has closed this and all other locations.

Coming Soon

Xi’an Famous Foods (313 6th Avenue, between Cornelia and Carmine Streets): Xi’an is a city in northwest China and this chainlet has been serving the food of the region since 2005. The most popular item on the menu is the hand-tipped Biang Biang noodles fried in oil and seasoned with cumin, chili, and Sichuan peppercorns, similar to those served at Very Fresh Noodles in Chelsea Market. Many of the dishes contain lamb. This location, on a rather bleak stretch of 6th Avenue will be their tenth store in Manhattan. According to signs plastered around the neighborhood, Uncle Biagio has applied for a liquor license in the Monument Lane space. No other information is available at this time.

ad hoc | collective COFFEE + SHOPPE (13 Christopher Street, near Gay Street): This new subterranean coffee shop is in soft opening mode. Coffee, breakfast foods, and pastries are available now to consume on the comfortable couches. Everything in the store is for sale, including the art on the walls.

Moving

Fortunately, the excellent Stevdan Pen & Stationers (474 6th Avenue, at West 12th Street) is not closing, but rather, moving across the street to the much smaller space that used to house Custom Care Cleaners (473 6th Avenue, between West 12th and West 11th Streets).

E.A.K. Ramen” and ”Emily” photos by Ede Rothaus. All other photos by Maggie Berkvist.

Civility Amidst PRIDE Celebration

On PRIDE Sunday, June 25th, amidst the very popular Annual PRIDE Block Party—which extends from Abingdon Park to 14th Street—a fire broke out.

The weather was perfection and the festive, rainbow-attired crowd was in a great mood. The streets were jammed with revelers—a few obviously inebriated. Suddenly, a whiff of smoke blew by as sirens sounded. Very soon, many fire engines sped to the scene, making their way through this dense crowd on Hudson Street.

The civility of the crowd, the kindness I witnessed in the way people cleared the street, was truly amazing... inspiring! I found myself on Hudson Street directly across from the fire. I am so grateful for this sweet crowd and the brave work of our fireman (and women). Text by Jill Lynne. Photo by Elizabeth Van Hook.
**Drink Pink, By Victoria James—A Timely Summer Read**

By Caroline Benveniste

Victoria James is not your typical sommelier. In a field dominated by men, it is unusual to see a young woman, particularly one who has already received numerous awards and made *Wine and Spirits Magazine*’s list of ‘Best New Sommeliers of 2016.’ Victoria is a local celebrity: She is the wine director at Piora, located at 430 Hudson Street, between Leroy and Morton Streets, which makes her the youngest wine director of any Michelin-starred restaurant in the world.

*Drink Pink* came to be after Victoria wrote an article on rosés and a publisher approached her about writing a book on the subject. At first, she demurred. She felt that it was difficult enough to be taken seriously as a young woman in the wine world without writing a book about a wine that many people don’t take seriously. Eventually, two things changed her mind: the fact that she really likes rosés, and her boyfriend, who told her to just go ahead and “embrace it.”

We are lucky that she decided to write the book. Rosé is a misunderstood wine that went through a rough patch when inferior rosés dominated the landscape (think White Zinfandel). But people’s perceptions of rosé have changed quite a bit in the last few years, and many are discovering the very fine rosés out there. In the U.S., it is currently the fastest growing wine category.

The book is interesting, entertaining, very pretty, and very pink! It begins with a history of rosé wines: The earliest wines date back to the 8th century B.C. in ancient Greece, and were light pink. Victoria then discusses the very pink wines to drink by region. Towards the end of the book, there is a section on “Rosé Cocktails” and recipes for dishes that Victoria enjoys eating with rosés. The whimsical illustrations were done by Lyle Railsback, Victoria’s boyfriend who, in addition to being artistic, is a wine maker and works in sales for a prestigious wine merchant.

I was lucky to work with Victoria on a rosé wine tasting that took place on Friday, June 16th. She concluded the evening with this thought: “Each little glass has a place and time where it belongs, perhaps with certain dishes or for particular occasions. Rosé, just like red and white, holds a sense of place, the notion of terroir. It speaks to a region, centuries of tradition, the climate and winemaker influences. It is more than just a color.”

Victoria has had a busy spring. In addition to her book launch, she has also overseen the wine selections at Cote, a new Korean steakhouse by the Piora team, which just opened in the Flatiron District. But most evenings you can find her at Piora, so stop by and she’ll help you pick from the 30-plus rosés on the wine list and even autograph your copy of *Drink Pink.*

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**Take Broadway Home!**

**Tony Award-Winning/Nominated Musicals**

By Ellis Nassour

“It’s been a season filled with creativity, diversity, innovation, exciting debuts, and a thrilling comeback,” says Charlotte St. Martin, Broadway League president. “There’s nothing like live theater, and no better way to see it than on Broadway.”

If you haven’t been fortunate enough to grab tickets for the season’s hot musicals, however, these bargain-priced original cast albums are a perfect way to enjoy aspects of the in-person experience.

Dear Evan Hansen by Benj Pasek, Justin Paul, and Steven Levenson (Atlantic: 14 tracks): Tony winner for Best Musical. This musical is a moving experience exploring the devastating emotions of an emotionally-repressed teen, who is hiding a secret. He uses tragedy to become close to a suicide victim’s sister and family, only to pay a life-altering price. *Bandstand* by Richard Oberacker and Rob Taylor (Broadway). In this musical, returning WWII soldier and singer/songwriter, Corey Cott, forms a band with vets to seek Hollywood fame. Haunted by memories of his dead pal, he meets his young widow, Tony nominee Laura Osnes, who reluctantly joins the band. There’s an instant attraction until a shattering secret is revealed. The show boasts pulsating Big Band orchestrations.

*A Bronx Tale* by Alan Menken and Glenn Slater (Ghostlight). This is an adaptation of Chazz Palminteri’s 2007 streetwise play (also a 1993 film) about a father who challenges a mob boss to retain influence over his son. The show is set in the rough-and-tumble 1960s Bronx, where crime does pay. You will notice traces of Wise Guys and Jersey Boys doo-wop.

Also available are: *Charlies and the Chocolate Factory* by Scott Wittman and Marc Shaiman (Masterworks Broadway), which is based on Roald Dahl’s novel; and a two-disc revival of *Follies* by William Finn and James Lapine (Ghostlight: 60-page booklet), which his now closed. The latter is a Tony nominee for Best Revival and explores the changing relationships in modern families. The cast featured Tony nominee Christian Borle, Stephanie J. Block, Andrew Rannells, and Brandon Uranowitz. (The production was video recorded for theatrical release.)
Always use caution when starting a new exercise regimen. If you injure or overexert yourself, Lenox Health Greenwich Village’s Emergency Department is here for you 24/7. We are located on Seventh Avenue between West 12th and West 13th streets. Visit us at Northwell.edu/LHGV or call (646) 679-6678.
Reflections on The Bitter End

By Anthony Paradiso

The Bitter End club at 147 Bleecker Street, in the heart of the Village, has survived the test of time. Many stars, like Joan Rivers, Richie Havens, and even a guy named Bob Dylan, have come out of the club since its 1961 opening. There is no doubt that the Village scene has changed since its “Gold- en Age” in the 1960s and early 1970s, but the club is still standing and continues putting on shows for aspiring musicians and comedians. I sat down with Bitter End owner, Paul Rizzo, to discuss this iconic club’s rich history and current status.

“The [Bitter End] was opened… by Fred Weintraub and his manager, Paul Colby. It was home to many musicians, including Neil Young, Stevie Wonder, and comedians like Billy Crystal.” Visitors can view a beautiful mural painted above the bar with the faces of Bill Cosby, Billy Crystal, Joan Rivers, and other celebrities that performed at the club.

“Back in the 1960s, [The Bitter End] used to be one of the bigger rooms, which is funny if you think about it now. People like… Joni Mitchell and Cheech and Chong used to perform here.” Because of its intimate setting, the club can’t draw the big name talent like it used to, but Rizzo refuses to change that unique ambiance.

Keeping with tradition, there is an “Open Mic” every Saturday from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Rizzo wants to continue that. If you are looking to start out in this business what better place than the Bitter End? The “Open Mic” session is free and open to everyone who shows up looking to be a singer or a comedian.

“We do ‘Jam Sessions’… on Sundays and Mondays [for aspiring musicians]. Richie Cannata, [who] used to play with Billy Joel, does a Monday night jam,” said Rizzo. “We still get people to play who are studio quality. The jams are late-night [sessions] where you get [famous singers like] the Beach Boys, Gavin DeGraw, or Neil Diamond to drop in unexpectedly.”

Rizzo stressed that aspiring musicians and comedians can attend the “Jam Sessions” to experience playing with quality musicians. A Sunday or Monday night jam is $10.00.

The Bitter End has been the heartbeat of the Village for five decades and is still going strong. Rizzo says that he has no intention of leaving. That’s good news for folks who want to see an iconic club from the 1960s still putting out music seven days a week.

“I don’t have any televisions. I don’t play sports. I don’t do anything that’s not going on stage,” concluded Rizzo.

Horton Foote’s The Traveling Lady Now Showing at the Cherry Lane Theatre

By Robert Heide

The word from here to WestView readers, and to theatergoers in general, is that they ought to make a beeline to the Cherry Lane Theatre (38 Commerce Street, between Bedford and Hudson Streets) to see a great production of The Traveling Lady. Written by Horton Foote—a master craftsman known as the “American Chekhov”—the play has a top-notch cast and is superbly directed by Austin Pendleton (I personally consider myself lucky to have worked under Foote at the Playwrights Directors Unit, which he conducted for one year at the Actors Studio).

The Traveling Lady was first produced in New York City in 1954 at The Playhouse Theater. It starred the legendary Broadway actress Kim Stanley in the lead role of Georgette Thomas, now beautifully enacted by Joan Lighty. Georgette has been desperately run on the run, traveling from town to town across Texas in search of her husband Henry Thomas, who was recently let out of the penitentiary. Georgette arrives at a bus stop in a small Texas town with her six-year-old daughter Margaret Rose, played by Korinne Tetlow, who is enchanting and touching in her Off-Broadway debut. A combination of Shirley Temple and Jane Withers, Tetlow has what used to be described as IT in the old days.

Georgette is stunned when she arrives to discover that her husband is in town staying with a middle-aged temperance fanatic and spinster named Mrs. Tillman (Jill Tanner) who is trying to help him through his decline into alcoholism—which got him into prison in the first place. She brags about his newly won sobriety to a neighbor, Sitter Mavis (Karen Ziembka), who is looking for her aged and demented mother, an old lady filled with a sense of outrageous spunk, fun, and pure delight (played by Lynn Cohen). This gal is a real laugh as she wanders everywhere, disappearing, appearing, complaining, joking, and yearning to be free of the hypocrisy of small town life. All of this takes place in the backyard of the home of a matronly woman named Clara Breedlove (Angelina Fiordellis). The four women are skillful actresses with great, heartfelt charm and feeling.

Soon, Georgette is invited to stay at Clara’s house until she decides what to do or where to go. Clara’s brother, a tall, good-looking, but repressed man named Slim Murray (Larry Bull) is just right as the awkward and shy character who develops a crush on the attractive traveling lady. When Henry Thomas, the errant husband (brilliantly played by P.J. Sosko) shows up in Mrs. Breedlove’s backyard, he is stunned to see his wife and child in town already. Her unexpected arrival and their reunion throws him for a loop; he runs off on a drunken tear, stealing silverware and money from his benefactress Mrs. Tillman, taking her car to boot. He is, of course, caught by the sheriff (Ron Piretti) who throws him in jail.

There is a surprise ending I will not reveal here. But bring along your handkerchief, as there was not a dry eye in the audience. A sense of humanity and a great compassion for the people of Texas are evident in the writing of this fine play, one of Foote’s very best, in my estimation.

The show runs for one hour and forty-five minutes with no intermission, and I found it riveting. Contributing to the satisfaction and enjoyment of viewing this play is the set and lighting design by Harry Feiner, costume design by Theresa Squire, and sound design and music composition by Ryan Rumery.

Beth Israel continued from page 1

change. Or, apparently, if filed in advance, a change could occur 90 days after a filing, without approval.

But there is an answer: A project like the closure of Beth Israel cannot occur without a proper assessment under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), which requires an Environmental Assessment and probably an Environmental Impact Statement for a project.

• That contains more than 240,000 square feet of gross floor area, or
• Is substantially contiguous to public-owned or operated parkland. (Beth Israel borders Stuyvesant Park.)

Beth Israel/Mount Sinai has been strategic by filing its CONs piecemeal so as to avoid the 240,000-square-foot rule. But the courts do not allow “segmented review” by whatever agency is responsible for review—here it is the NYS DOH.

As you read this, a letter has gone to the NYS DOH asking them to apply SEQRA and stop Beth Israel. A second letter has gone to Governor Cuomo, and a third to Attorney General Schneiderman. By the time the August issue of WestView comes out, we will be in court!

Arthur Z. Schwartz is the Male Democratic District Leader for Greenwich Village and President of Advocates for Justice, a Public Interest Law Firm.

Remembering Victims of the Pulse Tragedy

Forty-nine people and the perpetra- tor, Omar Mir Seddique Mateen, were killed with an assault rifle one year ago at the Pulse gay bar and disco in Orlando, Florida in the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history. On June 12th, 50 people in white gathered on Christopher Street to mark the anniversary—an event organized by Gays Against Guns. Each person carried a photo of one of the victims. The owner of Pulse, which has been shuttered since the tragedy, has announced plans to turn the site into a memorial. Text and photo by John Gilman.
World Refugee Day Finds New Meaning

By Louis Mullarkey and Lara Mullarkey

On a recent June afternoon, the First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York, located on 5th Avenue, between West 11th and West 12th Streets, invited passersby onto its shaded lawn for a celebration of World Refugee Day. With live world music and free food from Eat Offbeat, the event commemorated the contributions and struggles of refugees in communities around the world, including New York City. “Many people don’t realize that families are being resettled right here,” remarked Jill Hilbrenner, one of the organizers. “There are little ways people can pitch in to help them feel more welcome.”

Established by a United Nations resolution nearly two decades ago, World Refugee Day has gained new prominence and purpose in the current political climate. As Nicole Stansifer, the Director of Outreach and Service at First Presbyterian, put it, “Our hope this year is not only to honor the contributions of refugees, but…to connect members of the community who want to get more directly involved with the organizations who need their assistance now more than ever.” Along with information on First Presbyterians own refugee resettlement program, there were information tables from the Queer Deportee Empowerment Project (QDEP), International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), RIF Asylum Support, Church World Services, and Eat Offbeat, a catering company that delivers ethnic dishes prepared by refugees.

Bonnie Woit, whose husband was a Latvian refugee after World War II, made a point of attending the event. She noted parallels between her husband’s experience and the current refugee crisis—with one significant difference. When the number of refugees swelled in the 1940s, she remembers the United States working to welcome more displaced persons, not fewer. Despite her disappointment with the current governmental response, Ms. Woit noted her appreciation of churches and community groups as they step up their efforts, taking a strong, positive stand against the negative rhetoric of the current administration. This event gave Ms. Woit an opportunity to show her support for such efforts, while also enjoying a warm afternoon on the church lawn, talking to new people and listening to music with her dog.

For more information on local refugee programs and how to get involved, please visit the following websites: First Presbyterian Church in the City of New York (jpency.org) International Refugee Assistance Project (refugeerights.org) RIF Asylum (rifnyc.org) Eat Offbeat (eattoffbeat.com) Church World Services (cwglobal.org) Queer Detainee Empowerment Project (qdep.org)
**Life on the Street in the Words of Writers**

By Barry Benepe

Walking is both the expression of freedom and an embrace of space. An automobile driver is imprisoned in a mobile metal box. Amos Hawley, a professor of sociology at the University of Michigan said in 1962, “If it is true that life is lived largely on foot, that the deep and enriching experiences are had only in lingering associations…the decline in time spent as a pedestrian, while the…time spent in vehicular movement steadily mounts, may suggest an increasing casualness of space setting and irresponsibility in urban life.” A person in a vehicle is moved from place to place. A person walking moves from place to place with a maximum of free choice.

Bernard Rudofsky, who enjoyed a particularly deep awareness of city form, observed, “Above all is the humaneness of this architecture that should bring forth some response in us…Photographs can only hint at the actual experience of traversing passageways through complicated spaces that play on all senses: sheafs of light-piercing darkness; waves of coolness and warmth; the echo of one’s own footsteps; the odor of sunbaked stones. The sum of these impressions adds up to an aesthetic adventure that, modest though it is, we are usually denied.”

The streets of Paris, which reflect a 1,000-year history and the passage of millions of footfalls, are largely spared the relentless walls of steel which have characterized Manhattan streets since the onset of automobile curbside parking in the 1930s. In Paris, the walls of stone buildings bond with stone pavement visible from both sides of the street. Thus, one has a clear definition of place.

In Manhattan, we have begun to open our historical living City to sensory experience. Spaces have been retaken from parked and moving cars and made available to those of us on foot and relaxing on seats at tables in landscaped surroundings. There, we can relax, read, converse, eat, drink, or simply snooze in the noonday sun. One of our longtime neighbors, former New York State Senator Whitney (Mike) North Seymour, Jr., once headed the New York Park Association, which lobbied successfully to legalize outdoor cafes to add to street life. Pop-up cafes and gardens have further enhanced the sense of place.

EXPERIENCING THE CITY WITHOUT STEEL WALLS OR AUTOMOBILES: Rue de Bievre, on the Left Bank of the River Seine, follows the line of an ancient stream in Paris. Photo by Barry Benepe.

FAMILY PRIDE: Here, a mother and daughter are pictured wearing a t-shirt honoring the daughter/sister who committed suicide due to gay bullying. Photo by Jill Lynne.

**How to Cure the Opioid Epidemic**

By Katie Lee

Since the 2000s, following the mass overprescription of opioid painkillers, opioid abuse has become rampant throughout the country and especially severe in New York City. The New York City’s Mayor’s Office reports that in 2016, about 1,300 individuals died from drug overdoses, more than any year on record. Of these deaths, approximately 80% involved an opioid. Alongside heroin, the synthetic drug fentanyl has been responsible for the deaths of many New Yorkers.

Opioid abuse is an omnipresent public health issue that takes familiar forms in familiar places. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that the highest contributor to the opioid epidemic is not a street drug such as heroin, but pharmaceutical prescription drugs.

What makes opioid abuse so dangerous and challenging to overcome is its ability to trigger reward processes in the brain with the chemical dopamine, creating feelings of intense pleasure and happiness. Not only does this create a strong incentive for the user to use again, but, with continuous use, the brain requires more opioids to elicit the same reward processes. Eventually, dangerously large quantities are required. Conversely, withdrawal can be torturous, as it causes severe, flu-like symptoms. Even though an addict may be determined to quit, the drug will have altered the body to counteract his/her goal. Within hours, an addict may feel the harsh effects of newfound sobriety.

The widespread and intense effects of the opioid epidemic are included, total savings can exceed costs by a ratio of 12:1.”

To find out more about the Methadone Maintenance Treatment Program (MMTP), Methadone is a kind of “drug liking” solution that reduces the painful effects of withdrawal and the euphoric effects of drug use, effectively blocking both incentives to continue drug use. Treatment typically lasts for a minimum of 12 months, though some may use treatment for years along with behavioral therapy. Methadone is currently the most effective treatment for opioid dependence compared to drug-free treatment or therapeutic communities. With proper administration, methadone patients are most likely to continue treat-
Digital Literacy Sessions at Jefferson Market Library

By Nancy Aravecza

In the wake of the 2016 presidential election, one buzzy phrase has been seemingly everywhere: fake news. The proliferation of online news content, social media, and a relentless news cycle is making it more and more difficult for consumers to stay on top of what's truth and what's fiction. As the online media landscape becomes more creative, complex, and sophisticated, people of all ages and experience levels are falling prey to the fake news phenomenon.

But fake news isn't the only thing tripping up consumers these days. New devices, mobile applications, web services, and social media innovations have brought new opportunities for companies and hackers to chip away at the privacy and security of users' information, all for the sake of fun and convenience.

Regardless of how new or experienced you are with using the internet, it's always a good idea to brush up on your digital literacy skills! This summer, the Jefferson Market Library will offer four, single-session classes to help Villagers do just that. The classes will be on two topics: “Your Media Diet” and “Your Privacy and Security.”

“Your Media Diet” will be held on Thursday, July 6th at 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, August 5th at 2:30 p.m. This interactive session will cover tips and tricks for spotting fake news, popping your filter bubble, evaluating news sources—including infographic and photographic news—and some techniques for maintaining a healthy media diet in the age of information overload.

“Your Privacy and Security” will be held on Thursday, July 13th at 6:00 p.m. and Saturday, July 12th at 2:30 p.m. This session will include tips for: setting up a strong password, establishing anti-trackers and ad-blockers on your browser, activating two-step authentication, spotting a phishing scam, and conducting anonymous web browsing. Students will also learn about big data, the internet of things, and why privacy matters.

Students are encouraged to attend one of each class, though all are welcome to take as many or as few as they like. Registration opens at 10:00 a.m. one week before the session. Students can register online, by phone, or in person at the second floor information desk. All classes will be held in the Mae West Community Room on the third floor of the Jefferson Market Library.

Nancy Aravecza is a Librarian-in-Training at Jefferson Market Library. She holds a Masters in English Language and Letters from New York University, and is working toward a Masters of Library and Information Science at Kent State University. Her studies focus on privacy and intellectual freedom, big data, the digital humanities, critical theory, and metafiction.

Times Reads WestView continued from page 1

RFPs would indicate that the Park should have long ago been turned over to the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner. Also, the management salaries should be used to build and maintain a senior center. Indeed, Bagli quotes Diller who mentions Durst’s “unhappiness with Taylor and Wils.”

But how does a good, huge City project get built? If you go back to 1858 and Central Park, you will see how two landscape architects—Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux—were given an empty canvas to create a rolling romantic campus.

Say what you want about the imperious Robert Moses, a college swimmer, but he knew beaches and created the best City beach in America—Jones Beach. Avatar-ugly Diller Island is the product of a lack of management skill, taste, and ability and it should be eliminated along with those who allowed it to come this far.
Do You Have Dry, Scratchy, or Runny Eyes?

By Joy Pape, FNP-C CDE CILC

Dry eye is a common chronic disease, or condition, seen most often in older adults. The medical term for dry eye is keratoconjunctivitis sicca. It occurs when there are not enough “quality” tears to lubricate and nourish your eyes.

Tears are important for the health of the front of your eyes as well as clear vision. When all is working well, every time you blink your eyes, tears spread across the front surface of your eyes, known as the cornea. These tears provide lubrication, reduce your risk of eye infections, wash away foreign matter and keep the surface of your eyes smooth and clear. Excess tears flow into small drainage ducts (tubes) at the inner corners of your eyelids, then drain to the back of your nose. When tear production or drainage is not in balance, dry eye can occur.

People with dry eyes either don’t produce enough tears or their tears are of a poor quality.

Not enough tears. Tears are produced by several glands in and around your eyelids. Production tends to decrease with age, various conditions and/or as a side effect of certain medicines. Environmental conditions such as wind and dry climate can decrease tear volume due to tear evaporation. When the normal amount of tear production decreases or the evaporation of tears happens too quickly, dry eye symptoms can develop.

Poor quality of tears. Tears are composed of three layers: oil, water, and mucus. These all need to be in balance to keep the tears from evaporating too quickly and to spread evenly over the surface of your eyes.

Symptoms of dry eye vary from person to person, but generally consist of: irritated, gritty, scratching or burning eyes; a feeling of something in your eyes; excess watering; and/or blurred vision. Advanced dry eye may damage the front surface of your eyes and impair your vision.

Treatment of dry eye aims to maintain the normal amount of tears to minimize dryness and discomfort and maintain your eye health. This can be done with your eye care specialist and some simple home care tips.

Medical treatment consists of adding preservative-free artificial tears, conserving tears, increasing tear production, and treating any eyelid or eye surface inflammation.

Simple home care tips consist of blinking often, increasing the humidity of your environment, wearing sunglasses, avoiding dehydration, and using nutritional supplements recommended by your eye care specialist.

Most importantly, if you have or think you have dry eye, see your eye care specialist. You’ll be glad you did.

This information has been adapted from the American Optometric Association section on “Dry Eye” (bit.ly/2ptlZgx).

Enjoy!

Joy Pape is an internationally known board certified Family Nurse Practitioner, author, writer, and presenter. She believes that every person is an individual and deserves personalized medical, integrative care, and hope for a healthy and full life. She can be reached at (212) 933-1756 and joypape@mac.com.
Landlords and Tenants Agree: London's Grenfell Tower Fire Was Preventable

By Joseph Turco, Esq.

Greenwich Village/Westbeth artist Joyce Rezendes, who resided in London in the late 1960s, often compares its Kensington district to Greenwich Village. Of the Grenfell Tower fire, which occurred on June 14th, Rezendes recalls: “We protested the construction of those tall buildings back then because they were so out of place in Kensington.” Another tenant says, “It’s sad and what’s worse [is that] it was probably preventable.” New York City landlord Ken Friedman agrees that fires the size of Grenfell’s are preventable and that fire safety is paramount. Most landlords and tenants with whom I spoke believed their own buildings to be safe. Rezendes, for instance, is comfortable with her own building’s safety and knows her way to the stairs in the dark. But is that all there is to it?

The investigation in London is just beginning. However, we can probably assume that the inquest will find that building owners violated numerous fire safety regulations and that greed won out over safety. How, for example, did that building seem to burn like a pile of dry newspapers and oily rags? Easily combustible building materials will surely be a culprit, but what can an individual resident do? Fire ladders generally only reach seven or eight stories, and since many buildings are taller than that in Greenwich Village, here are some quick reminders for residents in tall buildings:

1. **Know the plan.** Make sure you know your building’s evacuation plan, which should be posted for all to see. That escape plan should be practiced once a year in the form of a building-wide fire drill in which all residents participate. If it feels like a silly elementary school drill, too bad. Studies show that fire drills save lives. It’s an understatement to say that you’re not having fire drills in your building. *WestView News* wants to know about it.

2. **Should I stay or should I go?** Conventional wisdom says that you should stay put on upper floors during a fire because it will be contained and fire rescue personnel will eventually reach you. The Grenfell tragedy has put this advice into a stark new light. Surely, if you’re on a high floor and your building has a working sprinkler system, then staying put is still the “go-to” advice, along with sealing your door cracks with wet towels (to keep out smoke), huddling near a window (as long as smoke is not entering from outside), and notifying 911 of your exact location in the building.

However, if your building does not have a sprinkler system and you’re on the fifth floor or above, yours is a trickier decision. Where’s your fire escape? Is there too much smoke in the hallways for you to get out without succumbing? How close are you to an interior stairway? Is that a safe way down at this time? All of these, and more, are split-second decisions, which is why reviewing them several times a year is a good idea.

Man of Mystery: Sam Kramer, Master Jewelry

By Barbara Riddle

For years, I tried to pull the name out of the mists of time—the name of the avant-garde goldsmith on West 8th Street whose strangely anthropomorphic brooches and bracelets were modestly arrayed in a small glass display case below a Chinese restaurant on the North side of 8th Street, between 6th and 7th Avenues. No luck. In my mind’s eye, I could see the jewelry and display case, but no craftsman’s name surfaced. I wanted to write about this landmark of my 1950s adolescence, to honor the maker of my mother’s wedding ring to Jack, her second and last husband.

Then, one evening a year or so ago, I opened a book I had taken out of the library called Manhattan Mystery Stories. I don’t even like mysteries, but I was feeling nostalgic and I liked the idea of stories that were all set in Manhattan. I leaped through it idly, and my heart almost leaped out of my eyeballs at one of the photographic illustrations: There it was, a shot of West 8th Street from the corner of MacDougal Street, and there was the glass case, with a name in clearly legible letters: Sam Kramer! Mystery solved. It was like a pinball falling into the last slot. Jackpot! I cannot tell you how satisfying it was to see that name again.

As I began to read more about Sam, I was more and more amazed. Sam Kramer (1913-1964) born in Pittsburgh and educated in California, is one of the icons of modernist jewelry design. Collected by museums and sought after by private collectors, his quirky designs incorporate found objects, fossils, and taxidermy eyes in surrealistic Dalí-esque combinations and forms. These designs expressed Sam Kramer’s unique vision at a time when uptown jewelry featured birds and flowers in conservative settings.

The shop on the second floor of 29 West 8th Street was opened in 1939; Sam and his wife Carol slept in the back room. A 1942 New Yorker piece entitled “Talk of the Town” quoted Carol as saying that her husband often worked until 3:00 a.m. or 4:00 a.m., but she always “got him up by 10:00 a.m.” Customers loved the street-level doorknob in the shape of a cast bronze hand that displayed a pigskin glove in the winter. To drum up business in the 1950s, Kramer sent advertising handbills, with wet towels (to keep out smoke), heading for a door that is warm to the touch. Never prop open a self-closing fire door. Never use an elevator during a fire. A fire like the one that broke our hearts in West London can also have a positive, transforming effect. All of the landlords and tenants with whom I’ve spoken since Grenfell are united on this non-partisan issue of fire safety, fire drills, safe hallways, and good working equipment.

Thank you to the National Fire Protection Association, Retired Chief Vincent Tuccillo, and the FDNY for the information contained in these tips. For more information, dial 311 or write to jatlaw2001@yahoo.com.

Want to Help Preserve the Village?
Support the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation
The Village’s largest membership organization since 1980
Visit www.gvshp.org / membership & join today!

Or return this form with your donation to:

GVSHP
232 East 11th Street
New York, NY 10003

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www.westviewnews.org
Kill The Zombie Park Already Part II: The Fake Alternative

By Alec Pruchnicki

It’s much easier to think of an alternative to a controversial project than to complete the years of hard work necessary to implement that alternative. Supporters of the Elizabeth Street Garden have proposed several alternative sites for housing—the biggest one being on Hudson and Houston Streets. But, there are problems with this site. The Hudson Street site, theoretically, could accommodate five times as many apartments as Elizabeth Street. But, where is the funding? If Elizabeth Street site funding, which was piggy-backed onto the giant Seward Urban Park Renewal Area (SPURA) project, could be immediately applied, it would only cover a fraction of the cost. Recently, the City even rejected funding for an engineering study that Community Board 2 requested. No funding means no project.

Speaking of engineering, the southern half of the Hudson Street site is riddled with infrastructure problems. There are two large air shafts going down to the new water tunnel, along with about 28 full-sized sewer manhole covers and 24 small covers for gas and water shut-off valves. It might be difficult, if not impossible, for a site crisscrossed with these lines to accommodate a foundation for any sizable building.

Hudson and Houston Streets is also one of the busiest intersections in the West Village, compared to tiny Elizabeth Street. Traffic along Houston Street is often very fast as drivers try to beat the red lights. How dangerous would this intersection be for young children or old people with their unstable gait, canes, walkers, and wheelchairs?

Where Did My Neighbors Go?

By Mary Alice Kellogg

Invasion of the Body Snatchers resulted from author Jack Finney’s imagination, but I’m living it in real time, as individuals, couples, family units—my neighbors—are disappearing. My West Village has always been a tranquil place—save for weekends—but now our streets are strangely empty during the week. The stillness is sinister. I search for pods.

Ten years ago, a six-apartment townhouse across the street was renovated as a one-family home. In short order, four others followed suit. Then the first “double-wide” appeared: Two historic houses were taken down to the studs. Four others followed suit. Then the first “double-wide” appeared. Roughly more than 150 neighbors so far. If you examine properties within a three-block radius, where apartments had vanished, my neighbors with them.

When three townhouses on the next corner were bought six months ago to create a mansion (to house two people), I broke out the calculator: Eighteen more apart- ments gone. Roughly more than 150 neighbors so far. If you examine properties within a three-block radius, where at least five single townhouses and four double-wides are currently being renovated, that number climbs. Did I know all of these people? Of course not. I knew many enough to acknowledge a Village “Good morning” and knew others by name. But they were my neighbors. They were, simply, there. On the street. Every day.

Now they’re gone. I don’t begrudge those with abundant funds to create the homes of their dreams. But only two of seven renovated townhouses on my block have owners who are part of daily street life. The others: not so much. Many are home only a few months of the year, while others jump into town cars and never seem to set foot on the street at all. Instead of using local businesses, their deliveries—entire gardens, groceries, dry cleaning, etc.—arrive in vans marked from places quite out-of-nabe.

I came to the Village in 1970 from a Southwest city where people drove cars two blocks to the grocery store and hardly knew the people next door. The Village was the only place I ever wanted to live; its history, intimacy, and community have nourished me ever since. Now I see that community vanishing. Of the new triple-wide owners, who won’t move in until a year-long renovation is finished, I wondered: Will they be Villagers?

We’re far removed from the realities of Billionaire’s Row, where an Edifice Complex dictates tax haven domiciles and street life is spectacle. I just want those who make a new home in the Village to be part of the community that was so attractive to them in the first place. Is that too much to ask?

In the increasing silence of our streets, I think of my vanished neighbors. Where did they go? Buyouts no doubt sent many of them out of the City; others perhaps found a less expensive nabe which now benefits from their presence and talents. I hope all are doing well, that they found good places to live, and that their children are in decent schools. Even if I never knew their names, they were the soul of the Village and I miss them.

Mary Alice Kellogg is a former Associate Editor of Newsweek, Senior Editor of Parade, and Contributing Editor for Bon Appétit, TV Guide, and Delta Sky. Her writing has appeared in more than 200 magazines and newspapers.
Up Close: Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel Exhibit at the World Trade Center Oculus

THE SISTINE CHAPEL—THE LAST JUDGMENT: One of the world’s greatest artistic achievements, now on view in NYC, is the next best thing to actually visiting the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican. Photos by Erich Lessing.

By Ellis Nassour

Breathtaking photos featuring sections of Michelangelo’s ceiling and wall frescoes from the Vatican’s Sistine Chapel are on display through July 23rd in Up Close: Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel at the World Trade Center Oculus—Westfield’s shopping and transit hub at 186 Greenwich Street, one block South of Cortlandt Street. (The venue is also accessible via the Fulton Street complex.)

The 34 giant reproductions, captured by Viennese photographer Erich Lessing, include the three-story high The Last Judgment, which adorns the Sistine Chapel’s sanctuary behind the main altar. These images allow visitors to experience the amazing colors and sense of depth of one of the world’s greatest artistic achievements. Among other reproductions are one of the artist’s best known and most powerful works, The Creation of Adam, with God’s hand outstretched to his first human. The Fall and Expulsion from Garden of Eden and one of Michelangelo’s most violent works, The Great Flood, which depicts people trying in vain to board the ark while others swim in a futile attempt to reach higher ground, are also on display.

On hand at the exhibit was Columbia University’s Art History and Archaeology Lecturer, Dr. Lynn Catterson, who provided insight into the sweeping grandeur of Michelangelo’s four-year creation. “This wasn’t an assignment Michelangelo sought, but when commissioned by Pope Julius II [for whom he was creating sculptures for his tomb], it was an offer he couldn’t refuse. The [Sistine] Chapel frescoes proved to be a challenge because he had to invent many different human figures and faces.” There are examples of the changes in the artist’s style throughout the execution of the ceiling and The Last Judgment, which wasn’t begun until 25 years after the Sistine Chapel, when Michelangelo was 67.

Using 300 mostly male nudes, Michelangelo depicts the end of time, with angels blowing their trumpets to wake the dead. With his right hand, God raises the good, with his left, he casts sinners into hell. At center-right is Michelangelo’s self-portrait as the flayed skin held by St. Bartholomew, who sits among God’s elect. The reproductions depict stories from Genesis, Kings, and other books of the Old Testament. They include: God Separates Water from the Heavens, The Creation of Eve, The Prophets, and David and Goliath.

“There are few artists as beloved as Michelangelo and no more astounding example of his incredible artistic achievement than his Sistine Chapel ceiling and wall frescoes,” says Scott Sanders, Westfield’s creative head of global entertainment. “It’s awe-inspiring to see this artwork in an up close and intimate setting.”

Sanders is a two-time Tony Award-winning producer (The Color Purple revival, Elaine Stritch at Liberty) and a producer of the much-anticipated film adaptation of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s 2008 Tony Award-winning Best Musical In the Heights. He states, “The exhibit is designed for art lovers or those who may never have the opportunity to experience a visit to the Vatican, and those wishing to relive their visit.”

The exhibit is the next best thing to being flat on your back on scaffolding at the top of the Sistine Chapel. Only through Lessing’s photos can you see where Michelangelo would take a break from work on a subject and where he would return; deteriorating sections that have been patched, stapled, or show cracks; and work following Michelangelo’s death to drape genitals. You’ll see human figures in the close-up that would be lost to you so high up on the ceiling. Amazingly, the eye-popping colors of the pigments Michelangelo chose for the frescoes are still quite vivid.

Each reproduction carries a detailed legend, but the audio guide, with narrative accompaniment in four languages (a $3.00 rental), will prove to be an invaluable asset.

Tickets at $15.00 each are on sale at Westfield’s World Trade Center Oculus and on the website: westfield.com/upclose. There are discounts for students, seniors, and groups of 10 or more.

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WestView News
July 2017
Ruminations about Extraterrestrial Life (Part Two)

By Josef Eisinger©

In Part One of this article, I posed the question: Is our story of life on Earth unique or did life also develop elsewhere? I also discussed some of the observations and laws of physics that affect the likelihood of life emerging and evolving on another planet. In this segment, I explore the habitability of Earth’s sister planets and of planets orbiting stars in our immediate neighborhood of the Milky Way.

We might begin our search for extraterrestrial life by looking for planets with a stony surface that can support lakes or oceans and receive sufficient radiation from their star to keep water in the liquid state, at least some of the time. For a planet to be habitable, its orbital radius must be in a fairly narrow range, which depends on the luminosity of its star. With regard to Earth’s nearest neighbors in the solar system, for example, Venus is too close to the sun and too hot for life to take hold, while Mars is much too cold now, although it may have supported life in its more temperate past. A balmy climate is, however, by no means the only requirement for life to evolve. Thus, a habitable planet must also be large enough to maintain an atmosphere that retains heat (but not too much, we Earthlings now say!) and also be surrounded by a magnetic field that protects it from space radiation. That implies, in turn, that a planet should be surrounded by a magnetic field—that is the case for Earth.

As stars age, they become brighter and their habitable planets become inhospitable to life. Stars that are much brighter than our sun may therefore be too old to allow biological evolution to reach a high level. Our sun, aged about 5 billion years, is fortunately only in her middle-age. The age of Earth is estimated to be 4.5 billion years—and because that is a time span too vast to be easily grasped, it is useful to convert it to one in which the Earth’s age is equivalent to just one year.

According to that make-believe time-scale, primitive life appeared on Earth only a month after the planet was formed and then evolved slowly in water. It took indeed 10 more months—i.e. until a month ago—before land animals began to inhabit Earth. About two weeks ago, dinosaurs roamed the Earth, and they were, in time, succeeded by mammals among other species, and eventually by that optimistically-named species, Homo sapiens, which appeared on Earth about four hours ago. All of recorded human history took place in just the last half hour.

Having eliminated our sister planets as potential habitats of life, it is natural to search for planetary life in our immediate neighborhood. Thus, astronomers looked to see if the sun’s nearest neighbor—a star in the constellation Centaurus which is aptly named Proxima Centauri—might be accompanied by one or more planets. Although Proxima Centauri is only about four light years from us, its luminosity is so low, that it is not visible to the naked eye. It belongs to a class of long-lived stars known as ‘red dwarfs’ which are very abundant in our galaxy. Quite recently, it was discovered that Proxima Centauri is indeed orbited by a planet, prosaically named Proxima b. We learn from spectroscopic observations that Proxima b has a mass very similar to that of Earth, that its orbital period is just 11.2 days, and that it is much closer to its star than Earth is to the sun. Because it is so close to its dim star, the planet receives almost as much radiant energy as we do from the sun. It is, nonetheless, unlikely to be hospitable to life because the frequent flares emitted by its uncomfortably close star probably blew the planet’s atmosphere away a long time ago.

Fortunately, the number of stars with potentially habitable planets is so huge that astronomers ought not be discouraged by failures to find extraterrestrial life. On the basis of a recent survey of stars conducted with NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope, it is estimated that the number of stars likely to possess ‘habitable’ planets is approximately one billion—in our galaxy alone!

Josef Eisinger, Professor Emeritus at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York, is the recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships, and the author of more than 150 scholarly articles that range from nuclear physics and molecular biology to the history of science. While at Bell Laboratories, Eisinger’s research base for 30 years, he and colleagues developed the Hematofluorometer—a device for diagnosing lead poisoning. Eisinger is also the author of Einstein on the Road; Einstein at Home (Prometheus Books 2011, 2016); and his memoir, Flight and Refuge: Reminiscences of a Motley Youth (Amazon 2016).
It has happened. Manhattan has become the capital of movies for serious filmgoers. With the addition of the new Quad Cinema, bought and completely renovated by the Cohens (the real estate family with a love of film), the family has acquired the U.S. distribution rights to many festival films from around the world. Now there is a jewel-like venue in which to show them—four screens and a plush, full-service lounge and bar to chat and discuss films (oh boy)!

Epix is a new multiplex on the waterfront downtown. Metrograph is located on the border of Chinatown and the very Lower East Side. The latter, like the Quad, is a beautiful theater complete with a restaurant. Both venues take film very seriously. They join the IFC Center in the West Village with their multi-screens—a sort of multiplex for art and indie films from around the world. The Film Forum, with its three screens and delicious pastry counter, is the Grand Dame of Art Houses. Its programing features a wide range of genres, from festival films to restored masterpieces, to series that provide everything a master's degree in film studies. Up-town, there’s the Film Society of Lincoln Center’s Walter Reade Theater (the best of all the theaters to sit, watch, and listen to a film), its two new spaces and an amphitheater for live discussion. There is also the MoMA, which is still trying to find its balance in programing since the departure of Sally Berger.

In addition to the multiplexes, you have the Rose Cinemas at BAM. Queens has the Museum of the Moving Image. Each venue has excellent programs and very smart curators. There is a world of choice if you yearn to leave your four walls and the small-screen streaming experience. I am hoping that with all of these theaters competing there will soon be a reduction in movie ticket prices.

I have one serious note on why you should actually see certain films in theaters, in the proper ratio. Movies made for theaters with large screens actually look better than screenings on an iPhone or a digital monitor, unless you have one of those $20,000 digital home screens that duplicate a theater. If you do, please invite me over.

Okay, it’s July and you are on Fire Island, in the Hamptons, in the New Jersey Pine Barrens or staked out in the Hudson (I am jealous of all of you). It’s hot and you just want to relax. There may not be any art houses near you but you’re jonesing for good storytelling and you feel like getting out. Suggestion: Turn on the fans and catch up on some of the quality work now streaming on cable. It is like we are living in a moment of reinvention—the golden age of television fifty years later. So, I suggest you binge watch the following: House of Cards (what seemed like fiction about politics in D.C. is today too close to reality (Showtime/Amazon Prime); the excellent The Night Of on HBO (this might be the high point of the season for me); The Young Pope (Amazon Prime/HBO now); and Homeland (HBO). Binge away because you can watch a whole season in one very long sitting if you are so inclined.

Let’s Go to the Movies...

**EN EL SÉPTIMO DÍA (ON THE SEVENTH DAY)**

**Director:** Jim McKay

The 2017 BAMcinemaFEST was full of U.S. independent films. Some were picked up places like Sundance and many were just home grown in places like Brooklyn. I was thrilled to discover films and filmmakers I had never heard of until I went to BAMcinemaFEST. But I want to maintain allegiance to parents’ and grandparents’ origins. McKay was also involved in the emerging independent film community here and across the country. He was, people say, the heart and soul of The Independent—a film magazine for filmmakers who worked with, the freedom of making film their way. But life caught up with McKay when he married and began a family. So he moved to Hollywood and for 13 years has been involved in the best of television productions, the kind that has turned cable streaming into a festival of quality.

McKay has now made his first film in 12 years, and it may be one of the best films of the year—En el Séptimo Día (On the Seventh Day). The bilingual subtitles are a very important part of the film because they are in both English and Spanish. (It is a little like listening to nearby conversations while riding the subway.)

It was the 2017 BAMcinemaFEST Centerpiece Film and it sold out almost immediately. (McKay made sure that everyone involved was present to take their premier bows.) The principal characters are young men, mostly undocumented, who make their way to Brooklyn and work as delivery boys in the restaurants of the City. I was immediately drawn in because when I walk my dog around 11:00 p.m. in the West Village, when the restaurants have closed (for the most part) and the workers are going home, I have see them on the sidewalk and have, not too successfully, tried to make friendly contact. I have tried to express solidarity and let them know that they are seen and cared for by people like me who live here. In the present anti-immigrant political climate, it has become more important to see these workers as real, dimensioned people and not just as statistics and bodies scurrying to get from one place to another.

McKay created this environment where we see the workers at rest in their safe, shared, usually crowded, living spaces. We also see how the bounds of friendship are so important to these workers as real, dimensioned people and how solidarity and support are so important to them.

Sunday is their day off. The film’s title is a reference to the biblical quote when God too has the day off from work. Set in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn, McKay captures the feel of a neighborhood in the middle of gentrification by hipsters and digital start-up geeks. We see it best in the places the workers deliver food. What is remarkable is how McKay does not play the politically correct card but simply reveals human beings. Almost all the characters are played by amateur actors who work hard. The lead character plays hard in the soccer game and is the pivotal player needed as they advance to the finals. We learn through an intimate phone conversation that he is married, that his wife is five months pregnant, and that he wants to bring her to NYC for the birth of their baby.

Here are some other films of merit:

**CITY OF GHOSTS** (Director: Matthew Heineman): In this film, we are in a city in Syria, which is under siege and just about destroyed by the fighters on both sides—the ISIS and the “Freedom Fighters.” Amazingly, a handful of anonymous activists who banded together after their homeland was taken over by ISIS in 2014 became citizen journalists as they faced the realities of life undercover, on the run, and in exile.

**500 YEARS** (Director: Pamela Yates): This was the one of the standout films in the Human Rights Watch Film Festival at Lincoln Center last month. This is the third and last segment of a three-part history of the struggle in Guatemala. I highly recommend it even if you have not seen the first two parts.

**THE BIG SICK** (Director: Michael Showalter): This is a comedy about the clash of cultures and how it affects the secularized grown-up orchid of middle class Indian parents in suburban America. Kumail Nanjiani plays the son caught in the middle who cannot tell his parents that he has fallen in love with a non-Indian woman played by Zoe Kazan (excellent). Throughout the film, his mother keeps arranging for him to meet with candidates she approved of to be his wife. It is hilarious, but never descending nor cynical in the way it packages the clash of cultures.

[Jim Fouratt’s REEL DEAL: Movies that Matter](mailto:jimfourattsreeldealmoviesthatmatter.blogger.com)
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