Tenant Protection and Drastic Rent Drop Came Too Late for Cornelia Street Café

By Karen Rempel

The New York State Senate Bill S6458, the “Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019,” came a few months too late to save the Cornelia Street Café. But at least the Café’s former landlord and its managing agent, the terrible duo Mark Scharfman and Mitchell Rothken, are hoist on their own stinky petard.

At the time of its closing on January 1st, 2019, the Cornelia Street Café’s rent was $33,000 per month. It’s now listed on LoopNet for $17,750 per month. How did this happen?

Robin Hirsch, owner of the Cornelia Street Café, introduced me to Lee Kostrinsky, who had the answer to this question. Hirsch’s friend Kostrinsky is the former co-owner of Smalls Jazz Club, which shared the same landlord as the Café. Kostrinsky tried to negotiate on Hirsch’s behalf with the landlord last November, shortly before the Café closed for good. He offered Rothken $18,000 per month in a desperate effort to save the Café. Kostrinsky recalls that Rothken laughed at him on the phone. Rothken said he had CVS interested, and Duane Reed. Kostrinsky recalls, “He said he had offers. All these corporations, Dunkin’ Donuts.”

Rothken laughed. The Café closed. We all mourned. But that’s not the end of the story.

Kostrinsky recalls getting a phone call from Rothken on April 6th, 2019. “I’ll never forget it. [Rothken] told me, ‘I lowered the rent. It’s $20,000.’” Kostrinsky replied, “We were willing to give you that in December.” Rothken said, “Oh well, whatever.”

Kostrinsky passed Rothken’s offer on to Hirsch, who said, “I’m not willing to move back to that location, it’s too painful.”

Hoping to reopen a music club at 29 Cornelia Street, Kostrinsky brought in an architect to look at the space on April 15th.

How to Celebrate an Urban Summer

By Naomi Sternstein

It’s summer in the city, in case you haven’t yet heard! The grasses beg for our picnic blankets, the flowers and expansive trees muffle the usual bustle and noise. We will do anything to be outside (recent heat advisories aside, when outdoor tables on the porch of San Ambroeus or in Hudson Clearwater’s garden were forsaken for an unbeatable spot near our AC unit and whatever we had in the fridge). Luckily for us inhabitants of the West Village, public outdoor gardens and spaces are aplenty.

This summer feeling, and perhaps what felt like a round robin of children’s birthday parties at the playground across from our apartment, inspired us to forgo the usual restaurant dinners and indoor gatherings and host my sister’s 29th birthday party one Tuesday night outside at Pier 46 on the Hudson River. Friends, this sunset celebration of 15-20 guests was a night to be reveled in!

I’m laying out some tips, so you too can host your next celebration outside...

continued on page 4
Mia Says:

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Contact Us
(212) 924-5718
gcapsis@gmail.com

Melville's 200th Birthday
Dear Editor,

There is an article about Herman Melville
in the July–August 2019 issue of Smithsonian Magazine.

Among other things, William T. Vollmann reminds readers that August 1st,
2019 will be the 200th birthday of the complicated, brilliant, bevedded author of,
among other classics, Moby Dick. I suggest reading it online.

Melville the writer is so associated with New York City and its environs—Gansevoort Street was named for a famous grandfather, or maybe the Albany Gansevoorts, Dutch landowners—that there still seems something familiar, even neighborly, about him. Or maybe it is the fact that we all have, or had, our own personal white whale(s) with which to contend. Stutterers, for example, have Billy Budd as a sort of patron saint; Billy’s inability to defend, or express himself verbally, gets him, well, hanged. (Readers need to know that that particular short story had been left incomplete in a drawer. Melville was apparently still working on the final interpretation of that battle between good and evil when death overtook him). Bartleby the Scrivener? Well, once upon a time, Bartleby, the hired man who simply “prefer(red) not to,” was pin-up boy of certain civil servants in some government jobs. And I’m only scratching the surface of a couple of Melville’s characters. Don’t get me started. Moby Dick, the movie with Gregory Peck, was only one whaling story, and not the best one. In 2015 appeared, for example, In the Heart of the Sea, a film based on Nathaniel Philbrick’s non-fiction book about the sinking of the American whaling ship ‘Essex’ in 1820. That was the event that inspired the novel Moby Dick. The movie is very well made, with a hunky Australian actor portraying the main harpooner. I forget now who played the whale. There is a nice woman in a frilly dress. Seeing it with friends, we felt drenched with sea water at the end. Recommended for those with strong stomachs, or those who pretend they have one.

Finally, in 1982 Elizabeth Kray of The Academy of American Poets, cobbled together and published, Four Literary Historical Walks, one of which features our birthday boy, to wit, ‘A Walk Through Herman Melville’s New York During the Years 1819-1855’. If you cannot locate a copy, I will sell you my copy for $100.

Melville lives!!
—John Early, Charles Street resident

Praise from Terrence McNally

To the editor,

I received a very positive email from Terrence McNally about my article A Banner Year for Terrence McNally in the July, 2019 edition of WestView News and felt I should share it with WestView readers. As ever my hat goes off to Terrence—a great writer and friend. Having known Terrence for many, many years, I was delighted and moved to read from this year’s recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Tonys and author of the current Broadway play Frankie and Johnny in the Claire de Lane the following message: “I enjoyed your article very much. You have truly kept the flame alit. XXX—Terrence.”

—Robert Heide

Keep the Bike Lanes

The issues on 14th Street are complex, but misinformation, or at least a heavily one-sided drumbeat from a pro-car, pro-parking crowd continues. One assumption is that motorists, who would have otherwise used 14th Street to cross town, have no other alternative than to use the adjacent side streets such as 12th or 13th. That assumption fails to consider the many drivers who will simply avoid the area, perhaps by using 23rd or Houston or some other route altogether to complete their journey.

The concern of “more cars on our residential neighborhood streets” rings hollow. Do they know what else causes more cars on the streets? Parking! The more street parking there is, the more drivers come looking for spaces, in the process slowing the progression of all vehicular traffic. Bike lanes, which the 14th Street (parking) Coalition vehemently opposes, actually decrease traffic backups and improve the vehicular flow, in part because there are fewer cars pulling in and out of parking spaces. Less parking on residential streets enables all vehicles to move more efficiently by ridding them of unneeded obstacles. Even when the lanes are blocked, bikes are nimble and can easily go around obstruc-

MIA SAYS: Protested eternal love without a
ring is a contract without a signature. Photo by Dusty Berke.

The Bikes Lanes have not ruined the neighborhood; they’ve improved it. Photo by Bill Pullano.

Emergency Vehicle Pollution

George Smithson—I believe you have a doctor in the house that occasionally writes for you. May I suggest a look at the Northwell Emergency Hospital?

continued on page 3
Letters continued from page 2

With emergency vehicles spewing pollution 24/7 on West 12th Street between 7th and Greenwich Avenues, the hospital has created a terribly polluted zone...made more dangerous since this block feeds people into the 7th Avenue subway.

The reason the hospital gives for keeping the vehicles running is the need to keep their medical supplies cold. This could be solved in two simple ways. One, electrical feeders from the building could be constructed so these vehicles could plug into the network to keep their coolant working. That’s the simplest approach. And then, there is dry ice.

I cross this block several times a day and it’s ridiculous that a medical institution would be the cause of such health hazards. We should dry to get the EPA to track the air here. I think they would identify this zone as a hot spot.

I’ve gotten nowhere with Corey Johnson’s office nor the hospital administrators. I think a doctor could write a compelling piece about this. And it would not surprise me if this issue is repeated across the city everywhere there is an emergency hospital.

At your last meeting, the discussion talked about raising news-breaking issues that could be picked up by other news outlets. This certainly would be one. I would be happy to help out. But I think having a medical writer is essential to secure the respect by calling him “J) in a civil rights trial ed a former neighbor (whose privacy I will not discuss. I want to make sure that you are aware of what we have done in this area. Every emergency ambulance that we have purchased during the last year have been green ambulances. We have done this to reduce emissions. We also do have an electric station where we plug our ambulance in. We were going to have a second location and actually contracted with a company to install a charging station. Unfortunately after preparing all of the wiring, the company went out of business. That being said we do have one station currently and will only be purchasing green ambulances at this point in time. We do not have any control over the other ambulances that bring patients to our facility, however we have been very mindful of our own. I did notice that one of the FDNY ambulances that was parked here the other day was a green ambulance as well. I hope that helps. Please feel free to reach out to me.

Alex Hellinger, Executive Director Lenox Health Greenwich Village

We Need Another Jane Jacobs!

Dear Mr. Capsis,

I am a new subscriber to WestView News and I look forward to receiving my monthly issue each month. However, I must disagree with your page one article, “We Need Robert Moses.” If Mr. Moses had had his way, lower Manhattan would be paved over and vehicles would be streaming through Washington Square Park! He destroyed entire neighborhoods in the Bronx, Queens and Long Island when he got the Cross-Bronx Expressway and LIE built, and wanted to do the same to Manhattan. What do we need more Jane Jacobs! Having said that, I, too, am disturbed over the Pier 40 proposals, and St. John’s Terminal expansion. We have our local politicians to blame for both of those. The Greenwich Village waterfront and Far West Village sunshine never will be the same. I’m just waiting for an artist’s rendering, and an explanation in layman’s terms, of what a building that is “88 feet plus 20 feet for mechanicals,” and hundreds of thousands of square footage will look like. One hundred eight feet from what? Street level? Water level? The top of the current structure? Someone, please, tell us! Thank you.

—Linda Franklin

Captain O’Hare: PO Israel Torres Has Got to Leave the 6th Precinct!

By Arthur Z. Schwartz

It isn’t often that I write about cases I lose, but this month I just must.

During the third week of May I represented a former neighbor (whose privacy I will respect by calling him “J”) in a civil rights trial arising out of his arrest in 2014. The arrest was astounding. J lived on Bank Street, and when he got the Cross-Bronx Expressway and LIE built, and wanted to do the same to Manhattan. What we do need more Jane Jacobs! Having said that, I, too, am disturbed over the Pier 40 proposals, and St. John’s Terminal expansion. We have our local politicians to blame for both of those. The Greenwich Village waterfront and Far West Village sunshine never will be the same. I’m just waiting for an artist’s rendering, and an explanation in layman’s terms, of what a building that is “88 feet plus 20 feet for mechanicals,” and hundreds of thousands of square footage will look like. One hundred eight feet from what? Street level? Water level? The top of the current structure? Someone, please, tell us! Thank you.

—Linda Franklin

It got to meet with them afterwards, and to a person they all told me that if the case had been about the arrest, they would have all voted against Torres. “What kind of cop gives a ticket for jaywalking at 11:30 at night in the West Village, and then cuffs a local resident?” asked one juror. “Everyone in NYC jaywalks.”

She was right. Israel Torres is a disgrace to the NYPD. We don’t need cops in the Village who mistreat locals. Torres was self-righteous from the start, and high-handed after the verdict came back in. I want to start a campaign to get Israel Torres out of the 6th Precinct. I may even start a picket each week at the precinct. I want Captain O’Hare to know that we Villagers don’t want that kind of policing in our community. Interested in joining me? Email me at aschwartz@afjlaw.com.

Arts Schwartz is the Village Democratic District Leader and President of Advocates for Justice, a public interest law firm.

WestView Instagrams

the Issues of the Day

RELIGIOUS AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ACTIVISTS TOOK TO THE STREET to protest Kavanaugh’s appointment last August. Find photos from the news events of the day on Instagram @westviewnews. Photo by Karen Rempel.

By Karen Rempel

Last month we reported that WestView News has begun a video interview series in which George Capsis speaks with prominent cognoscenti about newsworthy subjects. We discovered that George is a natural TV maven, delivering compelling stories and coaxing his subjects to tell all.

This month, WestView is pleased to announce we continue our foray into the digital age, providing local pictorial coverage between newspaper issues on Instagram.

Our contributors are posting compelling images of local events as they prowl the streets of The West Village, and perhaps beyond. Check us out @westviewnews!
Yesterday's Justice, Today's Dilemma

By George Capsis

Oh wow—it was only a week ago that Dusty heard a rumor that our garulous head WestView distributor (and former seaman) was retiring to Florida and I thought, “Where does he get the money to retire to Florida on the peanuts I pay him?” And, bang, yesterday I heard he was not going to Florida after all. What happened?

What happened is that the New York State Legislature had turned very Demo- crat after being very Republican for many, many years and the rent laws which “regu- lated” the nearly one million New York apartments that 2.4 million tenants live in—but left the landlords with a bunch of regulatory tricks and legal maneuvers that could ease tenants out—had been cut away with a vindictive, indiscriminate, slashing Democratic scalpel and, ironically, our dis- tributor, who they were trying to protect, did not benefit.

Just last week his landlord offered him $105,000 if he would give up his $1,090 apartment on Christopher Street that he has occupied for 30 years. If he’d accepted the offer (which he did) and vacated, the landlord would soon arrive with his con- tractor and strip the aging apartment, lay shining wood floors, install the cheapest appliances he could find, and then charge $3,500-$4,000 rent per month.

Our friend both wanted and needed the $105,000. His teeth are falling out and he has already paid almost $3,500 to get work done but needs another $4,000 to continue, and this is not something the VA pays for. He’d found, online, a nice new re- tirement home in Florida that his nephew checked out as “Ok,” and sent a $350 de- posit for it; and then, bang, no $105,000. He called the landlord’s office but they would not give him the money.

Ok, just think about how this all got started. We’ve got a bunch of laws and regulations that go back, like, 75 years to protect the G.I.s returning after the war from rising rents. (No middle-class hous- ing had been built in New York from 1929 until after the war ended.)

Yes, well, blanket laws and regulations that affect, by definition, millions of people can occasion unfairness and abuse; to illustr- ate, I am going to offer one of my favorite little stories.

Forty-odd years ago, via a minor miracle and a broker who lent me the down pay- ment, I took on a mortgage I could barely pay and bought a brownstone on Charles Street so my three kids could walk to P.S. 41 (as their anxious mother watched from the stoop), and found that I had rent-controlled apartments with tenants living in them.

But wait—before we could move into the garden apartment three steps down from the sidewalk, we discovered it was occupied by a newly divorced young lady who, as her lawyer informed me in writing, had been successful in keeping her apartment in eight efforts against the previous two owners. “Sell your contract,” was his advice.

Rage, rage, rage against the snotty young lawyer who used the “rent laws” as a soul- less cudgel against my wife and three kids.

I waited weeks and weeks but finally got an appointment with the head of the New York Rent Control Board—a Mr. some- thing like Bloomberg—who eyed me with guarded wariness as yet another complain- er. I told my story of how this young woman would not let me move my family of three kids into the garden apartment so I might make a sand box for them. “When you get your court date call my secretary” was his only comment, and he left the room.

I made a drawing of the one-bedroom apartment we were living in on Lexington Avenue and East 29th Street (my wife’s bachelor pad) and then the 20 x 100-foot space, including the garden, that Miss Cur- tis occupied. I brought these to the hearing as exhibits one and two; but there was no Mr. Bloomberg there! (Then he slipped into the room and sat at the back.) The hearing officer asked Miss Curtis why she did not give up the apartment for our three children and she explained that it was sim- ply impossible to give up the garden be- cause her dog did not know how to use the streets. “He has to go in the garden.”

“Congratulations Mr. Capsis for win- ning in New York City court but please be advised we have applied to the State,” came a formal missive from her lawyer (because at that time we had city and state rent con- trol). I wanted to kill.

I stormed down to Charles Street to con- front Miss Curtis, only to discover a small man in the vestibule who identified himself as her father. I unleashed months of seething rage. Fortunately, he was short and frail and I heard from him, “Yes, yes, give me some time, we will take care of it,” and weeks later he sent me a note that he had bought his daughter a townhouse so her dog would still have a garden.

And then, justice—I discovered she had rent-control tenants.

Summer continued from page 1

joy this summer gift.

CHOOSE YOUR LOCATION. Scout this out ahead of time. I recommend a spot that already has a few picnic tables for you to lay out the goods! If you want the view, then opt for one of the many piers on the Hud- son (and bonus points for having clean public restrooms handy).

FOOD AND LIQUOR. You’ll need food that travels. We made a colorful crudité platter with dips, chips, and had a few family-sized pies from Numero 28 de- livered (anything to ease our load). They also have a discount for ordering online. If you’re celebrating a birthday, don’t forget the cake! To drink, bring bottles of water or seltzer, and your own Signature Cock- tail or Mocktail. We mixed up a refresh- ing Paloma (Mezcal, Grapefruit and Lime Juices, Agave nectar) at home, and carried TUNES. Make a playlist for the evening on Spotify and bring a portable Bluetooth speaker. After reading too many reviews, we purchased a JBL Charge 4, though there are plenty of speakers out there for a range of budgets. If you choose to play music, make sure to be respectful of any- one else enjoying the public space.

THE ODDS AND THE ENDS. You’ll also need garbage bags, a paper tablecloth to make cleanup easy, forks, knives, cups, napkins and plates. You can pick up some sustainable options or be decorative and pick a theme (read: glittery cups and pink fla- mingo print napkins).

Get there a little early to secure your spot and set up. Then pour yourself a drink, wipe the sweat off your forehead, and smile—it’s the summer!

WESTVIEW NEEDS AN EDITOR!

We had a very good editor but two babies, a surgeon husband and moving to a new house was too much—so we need a new editor.

What are we looking for is someone able to look at an article and get what the author is trying to say and edit away all the chafe with quick precision.

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Cornelia St. Café continued from page 1

When Hirsch vacated the space, he was required to remove all the fixtures down to bare walls and floors. The anticipated tenant, Duane Reed, didn’t need a kitchen. (Yet Rothken’s current rental listing for the space on LoopNet inaccurately says, “The space boasts … a kitchen and bar on each level.” He forgot to say, “In your imagina- tion.”) The architect said that with current code requirements, the place would need a lot of work to return it to a functioning bar or restaurant, including making it wheelchair accessible and putting in handicap bathrooms.

Kostrinsky attributes the drastic drop in rent to the fact that there has been a large quantity of new commercial space built, such as the recently completed Hudson Yards. “If you’re going to spend $70,000 on commercial space, you’ll go into the new ones.” As a result, the older small spaces are getting squeezed; their infrastructures don’t work, the pipes don’t work.

This is no doubt a factor, but also com- ing into play is the fact that the worm has turned, and landlords are no longer fa- vored by New York real estate regulations and tax laws. Unfortunately, this turning came just a few months too late for the Cornelia Street Café.

Cornelia Street Café in Exile Plans Meatpacking Extravaganza

Robin Hirsch is still looking for ways to keep the Cornelia Street Café alive in exile while the search continues for a new home. He has been talking with the Meatpacking District’s Business Improvement District (BID), which manages event programming in the neighborhood, about doing an outdoor festival on September 15th. The usual Café shenanigans and hooligans are anticipated, including performances by Café stellar David Amram, Arturo O’Farrill, the Bond Street Theater Stilt Band, Greg Osby, and Billy Newman.
Polly’s Folly Will Be Adjudged This Month!

Disability Rights Lawsuit Against the MTA to Follow

By Arthur Z. Schwartz

I spent 24 years on Community Board 2. During those 24 years I interacted with numerous City and State Agencies (mostly the Parks Department and the Hudson River Park Trust), and I experienced the Community Board as a means by which the efforts of Village community activist pioneer Jane Jacobs was brought to life: planning was not done from “afar” (City Hall), but was a process where government engaged in an interactive relationship with local residents.

It was a process which saw Hudson River Park become what it has become, where local playgrounds were redesigned by the users, where liquor licenses and landmarks decisions took community input into mind, and where even street signage and parking rules were vetted by the community. But during the Bloomberg administration this started to change. Bloomberg created an Imperial Mayoralty with his sidekick, City Council Speaker (and our Council member) Christine Quinn, as his Major Dono. People still figured out ways to beat Bloomberg; if we hadn’t there would be a stadium where Hudson Yards is. His Department of Transportation Commissioner, Janette Sadik-Khan started building bike lanes, but for the most part worked to coordinate with Community Boards and affected communities, like when the Hudson Street Bike Lane was built.

Comes along Polly Trottenberg, Mayor de Blasio’s DOT Commissioner. Under her six-year watch transportation in NYC got slower. Bus speeds hit all-time lows. Under de Blasio-Trottenberg the For-Hire Vehicle population increased by 100,000 cars, mostly roaming around Manhattan. Meanwhile, with increased traffic, Trottenberg started building more bike lanes, often between the curb and a row of parked cars, usually eliminating, on north-south streets, a lane of traffic. The City unleashed Citi-Bike (which I think is great) but did little to require the hundreds of thousands of new commuter-bikers to abide by traffic rules. And now Trottenberg, whom I think is a “progressive” Robert Moses, wants to reshape our neighborhoods more.

Problem is, like Robert Moses, Polly doesn’t give a hoot about what affected communities think. I watched her sitting at Town Hall meetings about her L-Train Shutdown Plan, rolling her eyes, as resident after resident talked about how her plan for a carless 14th Street would destroy the residential streets north and south of 14th Street. When the L-Train shutdown was shut down, and Polly made it known that she still wanted to proceed, her subordinates met ONCE with the 14th Street Coalition, and those subordinates basically said that Polly was so angry about the fight-back against her that she wouldn’t change anything. (The DOT did agree to allow big trucks on 14th Street because the Feds reminded her that it was a designated truck route; her ADA compliance people made her agree to allow vehicles to pick up and drop off people on 14th Street.)

So we went to court, probably about 18 block associations (some as part of the Council of Chelsea Block Associations) and a number of co-ops, including the Vermeer and the Victoria, and convinced Judge Eileen Rakower to issue a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) because the DOT had not done a proper environmental review of its plan under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). What peeved the Judge most was the utter lack of statistics presented by the DOT. They appealed, twice, and twice failed to get the TRO lifted.

Now they have come back with some statistical modeling (no explanation of how they were derived) which they say shows “no impact” on 12th, 13th, 15th and 16th Streets (we also complain for people on 17th through 20th, the cross streets north of 14th). But here is what the statistics show:

From 8am-9am cars increase as follows:
- 12th 195 - 332
- 13th 242 - 408
- 15th 178 - 257
- 16th 204 - 295

From 9am-10am cars increase as follows:
- 12th 193 - 331
- 13th 240 - 424
- 15th 201 - 270
- 16th 191 - 263

From 5pm-6pm cars increase as follows:
- 12th 232 - 340
- 13th 305 - 465
- 15th 218 - 251
- 16th 216 - 287

From 6pm-7pm cars increase as follows:
- 12th 206 - 385
- 13th 293 - 474
- 15th 220 - 287
- 16th 214 - 322

These are hourly numbers. Polly and her crew say that an increase of 150 cars PER HOUR(!) is no big deal. We think Judge Rakower won’t agree.

And the tradeoff is to speed buses up 5 minutes, in a route which starts at Grand Street and goes to Abingdon Square. In fact, Select Bus Service (SBS) started on July 1, with off-board ticketing and fewer stops, a change which may have already sped things up. The trade off isn’t worth having endless streams of For Hire Vehicles and small trucks and vans going across our residential streets.

I call it Polly’s Folly. Hopefully Judge Rakower will see it that way too.

Arthur Z. Schwartz is President of Advocates for Justice and counsel to the Petitioners in Council of Chelsea Block Associations v Trottenberg.
The Hottest Street in the Village

By Ananth Robert Sampathkumar, Partner NDNY Architecture + Design

It was a particularly warm day in July. I had barely parked my Citibike at the docking station at Eighth and Greenwich Avenues, when I felt the incredible heat reflecting off 1 Jackson Square. Completed in 2008, the 11-storey high-end residential condominium sits on a corner lot and features an undulating glass façade that overlooks Jackson Square Park. The structure was designed by Kohn Pederson Fox, a world-renowned firm, best known for their international skyscrapers. The building faces due west and acts like a solar reflector for the mid-day sun, raising the temperature along Greenwich Avenue and the Park by several degrees. Photo credit: Ananth Sampathkumar.

1 JACKSON SQUARE: The building faces due west and acts like a solar reflector for the mid-day sun, raising the temperature along Greenwich Ave and the Park by several degrees. Photo credit: Ananth Sampathkumar.

The building was designed by Rafael Vinoly. Three curved glass buildings were notorious for focusing the mid-day sun on the pool area, singeing some of their guest's scalp. The same phenomenon occurred in London, where a 34-storey skyscraper dubbed the Walkie Talkie building, by the same architect, melted part of a car with its precision focused beams.

Recently Mayor Bill de Blasio made an announcement in April 2019 that he will be looking into banning the construction of “the classic glass and steel skyscraper”. The Mayor’s office cited the fact that buildings contributed to nearly 70% of the city’s greenhouse gas emissions. No legislation has been drafted yet but it is in an interesting proposition. Glass facades are relatively easy to fabricate, as the frames are mostly made of extrusions. The installation is fairly straightforward as well, as they can be hung off pre-installed brackets quickly. As a result they tend to be the envelope of choice for fast-track projects. Limiting the amount of glass will not only make architects consider other material options but also make Audubon New York happy. Glass buildings are a major culprit in bird deaths by collisions, with reflective glass being particularly destructive. Per the Audubon’s yearly collision monitoring study, they estimate around 90,000 to 200,000 birds are killed each year in New York this way.

Façades are incredibly complex constructs that have to perform several functions, from providing light, preventing water infiltration and limiting solar heat gain, to being the brand ambassador for the building. Understanding their purpose from the interior as well as the exterior will go a long way in making building façades friendlier for all.

On the Threshold of a Global Cure for AIDS

By Kambiz Shokdar, Ph.D.

Since the 1980s, the emphasis in the medical community has largely been on treating or preventing AIDS—not curing it. However, recent advances have created new opportunities to develop a global cure, which could end AIDS for good. Logically, the goal with any infectious disease must be to nip it in the bud, lest it comes back to bite us. Without a cure, stigma, complacency and the mistaken belief that medicines for treatment and prevention are 100% effective will shake generations to come to expensive drugs just to stay alive.

Less than 1% of the world’s population—mostly people of northern European descent—is naturally resistant to HIV infection. In 2007, Dr. Gero Hutter at Charite University Medicine Berlin, Germany, was the first to conduct tests to see whether naturally HIV-resistant stem cells obtained from such individuals could cure AIDS. Dr. Hutter performed a standard stem cell transplant to treat cancer in a patient who also had AIDS, except using HIV-resistant stem cells. Twelve years later, in 2019, Dr. Ravindra Gupta, at University College London, England, performed a similar treatment also using naturally HIV-resistant stem cells to treat a second patient having both cancer and AIDS. Both patients were cured of AIDS as well as cancer. What’s needed next is a method to create HIV-resistant stem cells for each patient using their own stem cells, as opposed to using curative stem cells obtained from rare, naturally HIV-resistant donor individuals. In the case of patients who do not suffer from cancer, this would eliminate most of the risks, costs, and complications that the first two patients faced. Scientists are currently researching cellular engineering methods to develop such a safe cure for AIDS that can be used on a global scale. I am one of these biologists.

When I realized that a biotechnology I had invented at The Rockefeller University and commercialized via Chromocell Corporation might one day help to yield a safe and scalable cure, I set out to establish the best charitable use of our technology and leverage it to shake complacency, give hope, and raise the funds needed to end AIDS, worldwide. Earlier this year, Research Foundation to Cure AIDS (RFTCA), a new non-profit organization I established in 2014, licensed its use in the field of curing AIDS— including rights to research, develop and commercialize a cure—in exchange for $1. RFTCA’s technology license makes us the first and only case of an IRS Code § 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization holding rights to biotechnology that holds the strong prospect of a cure for AIDS.

We’ve put promising science on the table. Now we’re looking for partners to build momentum, start-up laboratories dedicated to curing AIDS and accelerate the science. You can learn more and help us ignite the torch to cure AIDS by visiting FreeFromAIDS.org.

Google Lease Opposite Pier 40 Big Loss for Our Community

By Arthur Z. Schwartz

Folks who follow Pier 40 doings may remember a few years back when there was great noise and cheering for the sale of air rights from Pier 40 to the new owners of the St. John’s Terminal, a gigantic multi-block commercial office space running from Spring Street to Clarkson Street opposite Pier 40. The Hudson River Park Trust got formed a similar office complex. The author is a biologist, biotech inventor, a gay man and the President of RFTCA.

Google lease opposed Pier 40, the Hudson River Park Trust got the bid for what was publicly owned air rights.

We heard not a whimper from Corey Johnson (who wants to be Mayor). Or our “retired” (she gets a pension) Assembly Member Deborah Glick. While everyone was focused on efforts to turn Pier 40 into an office complex, our neighborhood just got more exclusive, with well-paid techies giving up our pier toFacebook. Now we’re looking for partners to build momentum, start-up laboratories dedicated to curing AIDS and accelerate the science. You can learn more and help us ignite the torch to cure AIDS by visiting FreeFromAIDS.org.

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West Villagers Can Walk to the Sea

By Deborah Clearman

Once again, Pier 40 is in the news, as the State Assembly has amended the Hudson River Park Act to allow office development on the pier. However, with some stipulations. Remarkably, the legislation calls for a boathouse, at least the size of the current boathouse, providing small-scale boating and water access on the south side of Pier 40, to be included in any proposed construction project. Why a boathouse?

Sally Curtis, president of Village Community Boathouse (VCB), which operates out of Pier 40, offering free rowing and boating programs to the public year-round, says, "The cove on the south side of Pier 40 is protected from the winds, waves, and currents by the pier’s massive structure. It’s the only place in the park that is suited for learn-to-row programs. Once ‘newbies’ have learned to row sufficiently, VCB’s senior coxswains take them out onto the river where they can safely experience the full force of nature in the winds, waves, and tides, and see the city from a new perspective."

These days Pier 40 is considered by many to be an eyesore. However, when it opened as a state-of-the-art passenger and cargo terminal for the Holland-America Line in 1963, it was a sensation. Easy car, taxi, and truck access and gleaming modern design whisked passengers out to the sea and back to shore. Picture windows, terrazzo floors, snack bars, and convenient customs services made sea travel a breeze.

Its glory days were short-lived. The first jet aircraft crossed the Atlantic in 1958. By 1965 airlines carried 95 percent of transatlantic traffic, replacing ocean liners. Holland-America suspended transatlantic service. In 1973 Pier 40 ceased serving ships and became a massive parking garage, with space for up to 2,000 cars. Also in 1973, a collapse in the elevated West Side Highway caused the highway to be closed south of 18th Street. For the next 25 years, the west side waterfront was a blighted area in the shadow of the hulking abandoned roadway.

The creation of Hudson River Park, begun in 1998, changed all that and led to the waterfront renaissance that is still going on. Like the highway and the waterfront, Pier 40 had been neglected. Its supporting piles had deteriorated, its roof leaked, rust was everywhere. Nevertheless, in 1997 Greenwich Village Little League president Tobi Bergman, who had a vision of youth team athletics on Pier 40, invited Mike Davis, founder of Floating the Apple, to set up a boathouse in the Pier 40 shed, in what had been a Department of Corrections facility, with a prison barge tied up on the south side of the pier. While Tobi and the parent activists of P3 (the Pier Park and Playground Association) were fighting to bring athletic fields to Pier 40, students from PS 811 and Junior Navy ROTC students from Graphic Arts Communication High School were building a boat on Pier 40 under the auspices of teacher Brendan Malone. The boat, a 26-foot Whitehall gig, would be christened the Rachel Carson in 1998.

For more than 20 years, as Hudson River Park grew up along the waterfront, as Pier 40’s beloved athletic fields established themselves, the boathouse at Pier 40, started by Floating the Apple, incorporated as Village Community Boathouse in 2008, has been inviting thousands of people a year to come down to the sea. To step into a small boat and set out, to feel the waves, to smell the salt air, to venture out past the Statue of Liberty even to the Verrazano Narrows and the Lower Bay. Pier 40 is more than a playground, more than an office building; it is a pier—a gateway to the sea.
Then & Now: West Street & West Village Houses

By Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

THEN—This 1940 view is looking east and north from Morton St. (right) with a set of Brooks Transportation garages at 371 West St., and a Tydol gas station on West St. at Barrow St. (left), foreground. The Keller Hotel is partly shown on the far left, at 150 Barrow St./ 384 West St., and the Federal Customs Warehouse (the “Archives”) is in the center background, a chimney at its front corner. On the right of the Washington St. background is another loft building for manufacturing or warehousing, prominent behind the barely visible NY Central viaduct (“Highline”) as it runs adjacent to the west side of Washington St. and crossing Morton St., beyond the trucks. Note the wide cobblestone streets and complete lack of trees. Behind the photographer would have been the continuous line of shipping wharves, blocking the shoreline. Credit: NYC DOF: Manhattan 1940s Tax Photos.

NOW—This matching winter 2019 view from the West St. parkway, still maintains hints of the historic buildings, from left, the Keller Hotel now undergoing restorative preservation, the “Archive” apartment-conversion building with its brick chimney in the center background, and the loft building converted to office use on the right at the corner of Washington and Morton Streets. One Morton Square condo tower is just out of view on the right. West Village Houses (WVH), a 1974 affordable housing cooperative under the Mitchell-Lama rental and the Housing Development Fund Corporation Programs during its first three decades of existence, is 42 low-rise walk-up buildings with airy apartments and light-filled courtyards, benefitting from the allure of the nearby Hudson River Park and recreation facilities. This portion of WVH fills the entire block from Morton to Barrow, Washington Street to West Street, foreground, now open to the Hudson River views. The former West Side elevated highway has been replaced in 1999 with a boulevard lined with shade trees and landscaping.

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With the support of New York University & ConEdison
Mt. Sinai/Beth Israel Applies for Drastic Changes

By Penny Mintz

Mt. Sinai/Beth Israel filed an application with the State Department of Health on July 22nd, 2019. The application seeks approval for the relocation and construction of a replacement building for the Beth Israel Hospital on 16th Street and First Avenue. If this application is approved, the hospital, with an 800-bed capacity, will be replaced by a 70-bed facility, and the 16th Street building will be sold.

According to the application, there are still over 300 beds filled every day at Beth Israel. This use continues even though most of the doctors who used to be based there have abandoned the hospital.

Mt. Sinai/Beth Israel (MSBI) made prior applications that resulted in the closure of the maternity, prenatal, neonatal intensive care, and adult cardiac surgery units. These applications were approved without any community input or consideration of community needs.

Assembly Member Harvey Epstein spoke with members of Progressive Action of Lower Manhattan (PALM) on July 23rd. The issue of the hospital closure came up. Epstein, a former PALM member and a leader in the group's effort to save Beth Israel, remains a supporter of that effort. He reported that the state application process has set in motion public discussions that will take place at Community Boards 3 and 6.

MSBI cannot build the replacement facility and destroy the old hospital without any public hearings the way they did in closing the four hospital units. But will these hearings be substantive or pro forma?

Whose needs will be given the most weight: the health-care consumers or the providers?

There are two bills percolating through the state legislature that could have put consideration of the health needs of the community ahead of the interest of MSBI in selling its extremely valuable real estate.

The LICH Act (Local Input in Community Health Act) would have been a powerful tool in the effort to save Beth Israel. The bill, if passed, would give residents and local officials a say in healthcare decisions by requiring that a community-needs assessment be completed before the State Department of Health can approve an application to close a hospital.

The LICH Act was originally introduced in Albany after the bitter two-year battle to save Brooklyn's Long Island College Hospital (LICH) was lost in July of 2013. The bill's sponsors, State Senator Daniel Squadron and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon, wanted to prevent what happened to Brooklyn's LICH from happening at other hospitals across the state.

The LICH Act has passed in the assembly every year since it was introduced. When progressive Democrats were elected to the state senate in 2018, it appeared that the time had come for the bill to be signed into law.

This year, the LICH Act passed in the Senate health committee and went on to the finance committee. In the office of Brian Kavanagh, the current senate sponsor of the bill, staff members expressed optimism about quick approval by finance. There are, after all, no costs associated with the law. Unfortunately, the LICH Act never got to the senate floor. In the state assembly, the LICH Act never made it out of the health committee.

Another helpful bill in the legislature would increase the number of consumer advocates on the New York State Public Health and Health Planning Council (PHHPC). The State Department of Health is required to take advice from PHHPC about whether or not to approve proposed changes to hospitals like the application MSBI has filed. Right now there are no PHHPC representatives advocating for consumers.

Under Public Health Law, “at least one” of the 24 PHHPC members must be from a consumer health advocacy organization. According to Lois Uttley, director of MergerWatch, which analyzes hospital mergers, PHHPC’s one consumer advocate seat has been vacant for over two years. The new law would require that at least four of 36 total members be consumer advocates.

The bill passed in the senate and was returned to the assembly. There it sits.

Maybe these two laws will pass in the next session, but that might be too late to save Beth Israel.

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BOOK REVIEW:

**Crimes and Punishments:** Entering the Mind of a Sentencing Judge

*Frederic Block’s new memoir, he explains pages, $34.95*  
ABA Book Publishing, Chicago, 210 pages

By Frederic Block

In U.S. District Judge and West Villager Frederic Block’s new memoir, he explains the challenges of punishing people for criminal convictions. It is a book of great self-reflection, written in a plain and engaging style that is accessible to a wide audience. Because the author bares his soul and reveals his experiences, influences, and self-doubts, lawyers will find his authentic insights useful in better comprehending how he and other judges go about their work.

Expanding on issues addressed in his first memoir, *Disrobed: An Inside Look at the Life and Work of a Federal Trial Judge* (2012), the author’s new book focuses on seven criminal cases, six in which he served as the trial judge, and one in which he sat by designation on a three-judge circuit court panel.

Prior to his 1994 appointment to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York, Judge Block was engaged in the private practice of law (1961-1994), where he handled both civil and criminal cases. In discussing the seven cases that are the subject of the book, the author masterfully weaves into the narrative countless war stories and personal experiences that he encountered in the profession before he joined the bench. From this narrative, it is clear that the author’s 30-plus years of representing private clients provided him with a solid foundation from which to understand the lawyers and litigants who have appeared in his court.

The book describes five sentencing issues.

First, is the problem with draconian punishments and the point at which they become cruel and unusual in violation of the 8th amendment. Second, harsh punishments and mandatory minimum sentences have shifted too much power in criminal sentencing from the judges to the prosecutors. Third, defendants can lawfully be sentenced for crimes for which they were not actually convicted. Fourth, the federal sentencing guidelines are too harsh and go too far in substituting uniformity for individualized sentencing. Fifth, there is a problem of race in the criminal justice system and the collateral consequences that result from a felony conviction.

The most compelling of these is the last one, in which the author recounts the case of Chevelle Nesbeth. She was arrested in 2015 at JFK Airport for smuggling 600 grams of cocaine in the rails of her suitcase, having returned from a trip to visit relatives in Jamaica. In 2016, a federal jury convicted her of cocaine offenses involving the importation of cocaine and the possession of cocaine with the intent to distribute. The sentencing guidelines indicated a prison term of 33 to 41 months.

In a 42-page opinion that drew national attention, Judge Block refused to sentence Nesbeth to prison. Rather, he sentenced her to one year of probation, six months of house arrest and 100 hours of community service. In so doing, he called on the federal bench to examine closely how a felony conviction can negatively affect a person’s life and concluded that the collateral consequences that Nesbeth would face as a felon constituted sufficient punishment.

In recounting this compassionate sentence, the Judge painstakingly details the evolution of his thinking. He begins by reminding the reader that over the years he has handled a large number of drug smuggling cases. He states that, in presiding over these cases, he has heard a lot of “bogus stories” from accused drug smugglers. However, five things about Nesbeth’s case made it different. First, she was a working-class college student pursuing a career in education. Second, she had no prior criminal record. Third, she had no known history of drug use. Fourth, the manner in which the drugs were smuggled was novel, although he believed that the jury had reached the correct verdict. Fifth, prior to Nesbeth’s case, he had just read Michelle Alexander’s book, entitled *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*.

Two of Alexander’s arguments impressed him. She convinced him that the large number of statutory collateral consequences facing ex-cons hindered their reintegration into society and the economy, resulting in a type of civil death. Furthermore, he also saw merit in her argument that the “War on Drugs” had disproportionately fallen on young African Americans, creating a class of persons who, when they emerged from prison, scarcely had more rights (and less respect than) freed slaves or blacks who had lived under the Jim Crow laws.

Triggered by Alexander’s book, the author asked his law clerks to research the collateral consequences issue. They found an American Bar Association database, which disclosed that there were more than 50,000 state and 1,500 federal provisions that imposed penalties, disabilities and disadvantages on ex-cons.

The judge then issued to the Nesbeth case lawyers a “homework assignment,” asking them to identify the specific statutory collateral consequences Nesbeth would face and opine on whether the court could lawfully introduce such collateral consequences as legitimate factors under the applicable sentencing regime.

The lawyers’ research revealed that Nesbeth’s conviction: (1) suspended her eligibility for student assistance programs; (2) barred her from any federal grant, contract, loan, professional license or commercial license provided by an agency of or appropriated by funds of the U.S.; (3) rendered her ineligible for federally assisted housing, Social Security Act benefits, and food stamp benefits; (4) took away her right to a passport until her parole was concluded; (5) revoked or suspended her driver’s license; and (6) precluded her from obtaining a teaching certificate.

Although heralded as groundbreaking by both liberals and conservatives, the Nesbeth sentence was controversial. As observed by the U.S. Attorney’s office in Brooklyn, collateral consequences were “meant to promote public safety, by limiting an individual’s access to certain jobs or sensitive areas,” and to limit government resources to “those who obey the law.”

Toward the end of the book, Judge Block states that he is always concerned “where the line should be drawn in exercising my judicial power,” recognizing that it is his job to apply the law and the prerogative of the other branches of government to change it. In the end however, he believes “It is my judicial responsibility to call attention to injustices that need to be fixed.”

The book also covers six other cases, including the author’s sentencing of the mafia boss Peter Gotti, former state senator Pedro Espada, the Carreto Family of sex traffickers, a child pornographer, and several others.

This is an edited version of a book review that appeared in the NY Law Journal. It was edited by Arthur Z. Schwartz.
The Legendary Caffe Cino
Designated a NYC Landmark

By Robert Heide

In 2015 the Stonewall Inn was granted landmark status by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. On June 18th of this year, six historic sites important to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people movement were also designated historic landmarks. They are the LGBT Community Center on 13th Street, the former Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse in Soho, author James Baldwin’s former home on the Upper West Side, the former Flatiron home of the Women’s Liberation Center, the building that once housed Caffe Cino at 31 Cornelia Street in Greenwich Village, and the sixth, on Staten Island, poet Audre Lorde’s former home.

Joe Cino opened his coffee shop, Caffe Cino, in 1958, first on MacDougal Street and later at a storefront on 31 Cornelia Street, where he staged one-act plays by established authors, eventually presenting premier productions of only new plays written specifically for the tiny cafe by mostly young writers, many of whom were gay. In 1967 Joe took his own life while high on drugs, locked inside the cafe late at night—in a ritualistic, knife-wielding, bloodbath dance-of-death on the first anniversary of the death of his lover, John Torrey, a lighting designer who had accidentally electrocuted himself. Joe actually died at St. Vincent’s Hospital two days later.

Charles Stanley, a regular performer at the cafe, kept the place going for a while, and then finally, Village Voice critic Michael Smith and the harpsichord maker Wolfgang Zuckermann tried their hands at it, but failed under the onslaught of fines levied by the City of New York. It seemed Joe had never secured a liquor or cabaret license. The summonses were served by policemen who demanded a cut of the weekly fines of up to $2,500. Joe had been able to avoid these fines because of his personal friendship with an officer high up in the police force. He had scheduled several plays at the Cino before his death, and in that final year a revival of my play Moon (with Linda Eskenas, Robert Frink, Lucy Silvay, Jim Jenkins, and John Gilman), was produced, as well as a play by Tom Eyen entitled Who Killed My Bald Sister Sophie? The last play done there was called Monuments, by Diane Di Prima, in 1968. In “The Case of Caffe Cino,” Joe himself was definitely indispensable to the operation.

An incredible highlight at Joe Cino’s unforgettable memorial farewell at Judson Church was Bernadette Peters, who sang a heartrending, tearful version of the song “It’s Raining in My Heart” from the show Dames at Sea—or Goldiggers Afloat, in which she had appeared at Caffe Cino.

The legendary aspect of the Cino, of course, has to do with the often extraordinary work that was done there by playwrights, actors, and directors. In the early years Joe presented short plays by Jean-Paul Sartre, Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Thornton Wilder, Noel Coward, Anton Chekhov, Paddy Chayefsky, Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, and others, but at one point in 1961 a young, handsome, curly-haired redhead named Doric Wilson, who later became a leading gay activist, presented two plays he had written himself, And He Made a Her and Babel, Babel Little Tower. Legions of playwrights presented their work after that, notably Lanford Wilson, all of whose early plays, most of them directed by Marshall Mason (in 1969 they were two of the founders of the Circle Rep on Sheridan Square), were done, as were the early works of Tom Eyen with plays like The White Whores and the Bit Player, with Mari-Charla Charba and Helen Hanft; and Helen (acclaimed “The Queen of Off-Off Broadway”), again with hunk Steve Davis (aka van Vost), in a red, white, and blue speedo in “It’s Wayward Skirt Won’t Stay Down. What with the goings-on at Mona’s Royal Roost (a bar), Frank Thompson’s Art Gallery; and hit after hit at Caffe Cino, the one-block-long Cornelia Street gained a reputation as the gayest street in The Village after Christopher Street.

The quintessential playwright at the Cino was H. M. (Harry) Koutoukas, whose play titles include Only a Countess May Dance When She’s Crasy, Medea in the Laundromat, and Cobra Invocations. Koutoukas was a regular, always at the cafe, along with a handful of others like the elegant Lady Hope Stansbury, the brilliant lighting director John P. Dodd, Kenny Burgess, and resident poet Magic Dominic. When a scheduled play could not go on, Magic and actor/playwright Robert Patrick threw together hilarious renditions of classic comic books featuring actors, playwrights, and directors alike. I once played Grumpy opposite Magic as Snow White.

In addition to the aforementioned Lanford Wilson (later a Pulitzer Prize winner), whose biggest hit at the Cino was The Madness of Lady Bright, Tom Eyen (Dreamgirls on Broadway), Robert Patrick (Kennedy Children on Broadway), Michael Smith (I Like It), and myself (my play The Bed premiered there in 1965 and Moon in 1967 and 1968), some of the other writers were Sam Shepard (Kara’s Mother), Paul Foster (Balls), David Starkweather, John Guare, Jeff Weiss, Jean-Claude van Italie, George Birimissa, and William M. Hoffman (A Is on Broadway). Directors included Marshall Mason (Wilson’s plays) and Robert Dahdal, who directed my play The Bed as well as the incredible musical Dames at Sea (with Dahdal discovery Bernadette Peters). Performers, among many, many others, included Shirley Stoiler, Claris Nelson (also a playwright), Lucy Silvay, Victor Lipari, Al Pacino, Fred Forrest, Jacque Lynn Colton, Larry Burns, and various members of a well-known Off-Off Broadway clan, the Harris family, including George Harris (aka Hibiscus, who later created the famed performance group The Cockettes), Michael Walter Harris, Jayne Anne Harris, and their father, George Harris Sr.

Now, lo these many years later, the legend of that magical, glittering place has become an important piece of theatrical—and gay liberation—history. First of all, it has been documented that it was the first Off-Off Broadway theatre. In 1985 Magic Dominice and Richard Buck co-curated an exhibition for NYPL at Lincoln Center entitled “Caffe Cino and its Legacy” in the Astor Gallery, and the exhibition documentation became part of the Library for the Performing Arts Permanent Collection and is open to the public. Magic also established a collection of Off-Off Broadway material at the Fales Library and Special Collections located at NYU. For more information go to https://magicdominic.blogspot.com. Robert Patrick, now living in Los Angeles, established a vast documentation (78 pages of Cino photos, posters, programs, press clippings, videos, and plays) of Caffe Cino at his website https://caffe.cino. wordpress.com. Recommended reading on Caffe Cino includes Caffe Cino: The Birthplace of Off-Off Broadway by Wendell Stone, Playing Underground by Stephen J. Bottoms, and Return to the Caffe Cino—A collection of Plays and Memoirs, edited by Steve Susoyev and George Birimissa.

Robert Heide, a frequent contributor to WestView News, is most recently the author of Robert Heide 25 Plays, which can be purchased at Amazon.
August Escapes

By Gordon T. Hughes II

Among the things New Yorkers and Parisians have in common is summer travel. I love that about those two cities. Paris, like New York, has wonderful neighborhoods, and of course my favorite neighborhood in either city is the West Village. Most weekends you see people of all ages on Fridays with small suitcases going off for weekends in the mountains, country or to the beaches. But come in late June and you begin to see Villagers with large suitcases hitting the road for a week or two at a time. Well, I’m right with them. I can’t stay away from the city for too long at a time or I begin to get itchy. I am originally from Southern California and that’s where I head for a week or so of warm weather and no humidity and it is always a delight. This trip was spent between Ojai and Santa Barbara.

It was in S.B. where we spent a week with friends who have a remarkable view of the Pacific Ocean with the Channel Islands in sight and no mosquitoes or any other kind of bugs for that matter. One of the nights, six of us were dining alfresco with great food and great California wines and that view, when I brought up the West Village.

I asked how many of these Californians had been to the Village, had spent time in the Village and whether any of them had a story to tell. Boy did I open the floodgates. Now we are all the same vintage, so all the stories seemed to emanate from the 60’s. My wife told me a story of her first visit to the Village—one I had never heard. You may remember back in the 60’s the coffee houses where the first visit to the Village—one I had never heard. You may remember back in the 60’s the coffee houses where the “beats” would play bongos and read poetry.

It had been her dream that after visiting the coffee houses of Newport Beach she would visit a real Greenwich Village coffee house like Cedar, and in order to do that she would have to lose the surfer look and get a big baggy “beat” sweater, which she did at a local shop for $20 bucks. Then she regaled us with the night she met Ahmad Jamal at a reading. Now my wife’s best girl friend told us about tracking down her “wild child” younger sister who in a fit of pique had run away from home to the Village, and how she went in search of her for two weeks and somehow found her one night at the Village Vanguard and brought her home. One of my best pals on the planet is a west coast Wall Street type who spent time in Gotham and somehow became friends with the owner of The House Of Oldies record store. He delighted us with stories of the basement of his store on Carmine Street and how he would spend hours as a young guy going through the vinyl and listening to music from the 50’s and 60’s. They remained friends up until the store closed not long ago.

There were other tales told, one about our friend who as part of his divorce package had to rent his ex a charming West Village apartment that even back then cost him an arm and a leg. He did not have the fond memories the rest of us had or have about the Village.

It was a wonderful evening with great wine, perfect weather and great stories. So like those Parisians, we New Yorkers do fle the city during the hottest weeks of the year. That said, the following week I was back at Panino Mucho Gusto Cafe having a cup of java, talking to my West Village neighbors getting ready for my next exciting experience in the Village and feeling great to be back.

5G IS THE NAME GIVEN TO THE MORE POWERFUL RADIATION THAT WILL DRIVE CELLULAR DEVICES like cell phones and other such instruments in the next decade and some are concerned with the health effects and that it might cause cancer and premature aging. Concerned Villager, Dusty Berke, arranged for a film showing and lecture at St. John’s. Activists were out in full force to protest the roll out of 5G. Health and Wellness radio personality Gary Null stopped by and spoke about the health implications associated with the technology. For more information about 5G check www.westviewnews.org. Photo by Dusty Berke.

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August 2019
Notes From Away

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

By Tom Lamia

Next week (as I write this) I start a five- or six-week residence in The West Village—a kind of forced exile from my farm in Maine—during the highlight of the year, midsummer. I will, of course, survive this absence and will return for the glories of fall and the changing of the color of the landscape, but I will miss being here during that best time when the days are long, the sun shines (mostly) and the air is cool, balmy and inviting.

In this last week of Maine reverie, my thoughts have drifted, dreamlike, to the future; to the path forward to a better place for all of us—to a harmonized working of our government and its politics. Specifically, my dream is of politicians finding the goodness within themselves to value principles above re-election prospects, and of voters finding the wisdom in valuing long-term goals and consequences over their personal and immediate fortunes and concerns.

I do realize that any realistic prospect for this, some might say utopian dream, must redirect a course of partisan division among us that now seems of such long standing as to be irreversible. I am going to look past that powerful historical fact and imagine, in my dream, small, realistic steps for the better.

First, that those directly involved in shaping and conducting government and politics might find a way to put into action the often-stated goal of working together to achieve consensus in crafting legislation and administering existing law. For this to happen, voters must be heard demanding dialogue, comity, and most of all, courage from legislators and candidates for office at every level. This requires a road map for voters to follow in conveying to parties and candidates that their votes will not be had by demonizing rival ideas, goals, parties or persons.

Second, those embedded in party politics must be held to account for draconian, divisive and disingenuous proposals and defensive rationales. The press has a role here—one that it has not been performing adequately. It is not acceptable for the press to be acting as partisans in their news coverage. Media outlets (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) reflect the views of their owners, of course, but they also have an obligation to the public and to their profession to inform without bias. Competition for eyeballs has become a powerful force in opposition to objectivity.

Third, it is highly unlikely that our current president, if re-elected, will implement my dream, so the Democratic nominee who emerges from the primaries and convention, now far off, must step up to effect a reversal of the present disastrous course; so my dream includes a nomination process in which the candidates show respect to one another, to the country and to all Americans so that the eventual nominee may be enthusiastically embraced and financially supported by all who seek a change in the presidency.

My dream is fantasy, of course, but it is one that I believe is widely shared. As a final element in my dream, between now and 2020, everyone will get enough REM sleep to be rational throughout the process.

In July (“We’ll See What Happens”) I neglected to mention that Lincoln’s vice president in his first term was Hannibal Hamlin of Maine. Hamlin missed being president by a few weeks in 1861 when Lincoln was assassinated. Maine was solidly Republican and would go for Lincoln with or without Hamlin on the ticket. But the Civil War was still being fought and Lincoln needed support from Democrats in border states, so he chose Andrew Johnson as his running mate. Johnson, of course, was later impeached for failing to support Lincoln’s Reconstruction policies. In my dream, Hannibal Hamlin succeeds Lincoln, the South is treated fairly but firmly and the Union is preserved as Lincoln intended.

In June (“The Past is History”) I mentioned Frank Wolf, my friend and colleague at the University of Mississippi. Frank is no longer serving in Congress. After 17 terms, he elected not to run again in 2014.
IN and OUT
by Caroline Benveniste

As usual, July was a quiet month. Two spots opened that are not what they seem, and there was also activity in French and Italian establishments.

Open

TOP OPENINGS
L’Accolade Natural Wine and Neo Bis-

Red Paper Clip – 120 Christopher Street between Bleecker and Bedford Streets. Red Paper Clip (RPC) opened in the old Pho Sure space in one of the mostly empty Croman buildings on Christopher Street. There is not much in the way of décor, and the menu is unusual with Asian accents, not surprising since the chefs are Chinese (American) and Himalayan. They met when they were cooking at Blue Hill at Stone Barns and both have done stints at a number of renowned restaurants around the US and the world. With North Fork at the corner of Bedford, Red Paper Clip a few doors down, and Fiaschetteria Pistoia at 114 Christopher, this sad stretch is finally showing some signs of life.

Also Open
I was quite excited when I stumbled on Posh Pop Bakeshop (192 Bleecker Street between 6th Avenue and Macdougal Street) as it looked like an old-fashioned bakery with layer cakes, cinnamon rolls, cake pops and more! But when I looked more closely, I realized that everything is gluten-free, and some things are dairy-free and vegan as well. Similarly, Rip’s Malt Shop (48 Greenwich Avenue between Charles and Perry Streets) looks like a regular burger and ice-cream counter, but everything served there is vegan, including the burgers and hot dogs. The ice cream is made with coconut cream and cashews. Ba Neul Tattoo has opened at 65 West 8th Street where a branch of Vivi Bubble Tea used to be. On the door is the following poetic exhortation: “You are my canvas/Give me a piece of your skin/I will give you a part of my soul/Right now.”

Closed/Closing
Bistro Pierre Lapin (99 Bank Street at Greenwich Street) has abruptly shuttered. Chef Harold Moore announced the closing on Instagram. He said that rising costs and fewer customers forced his hand. I am very sorry to see it go—he is a talented chef, the French food was delicious, and the restaurant was lovely and comfortable with a very friendly and helpful staff. Harold, his seasonal American restaurant in the Arlo Hotel remains open. Dean & DeLuca Stage (29 9th Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets), the fast-casual spot which had opened in the Meatpacking District in April has already closed. The company is apparently facing financial challenges and has also closed their Upper East Side grocery store.

Coming Soon
With Small Door Veterinary opening at the corner of 7th Avenue and West 12th Street, and Nordstrom Local coming next door, only the storefront at the corner of 7th Avenue and West 11th Street remains empty in the Greenwich Lane development on the former St. Vincent’s Hospital site. But it appears that Starbucks is applying for a liquor license at that location, and according to the New York State Liquor Authority website, the space will house a Starbucks Reserve Roastery. Before Fairfax opened at 234 West 4th Street (at West 10th Street), Gabe Stulman operated his Italian restaurant Perla at that location. But Perla was at 24 Minetta Lane (near 6th Avenue) when it opened in 2012, and Pete Wells wrote a glowing review in the New York Times, saying that the chef, Michael Toscano, “provides a thrill at Perla.” After Perla moved in 2016, the space on Minetta Lane remained empty. Now, Michael Toscano and his wife Caitlin have plans to open an Italian restaurant named Toscano at the original Perla spot. According to their application to the State Liquor Authority, Toscano will be a “full-service, fine-dining modern Italian restaurant that will focus on serving the finest food, wine and spirits that represent the regional cuisine of Italy.” The pair have been operating a restaurant in Charleston, SC called Le Farfalla Osteria which they will continue to run. Solaro, another Italian restaurant, this one describing itself as “bistro-style,” is coming to the Village to 13 Carmine Street (at 6th Avenue) where short-lived Venetian restaurant Giulietta’s Cantina Club used to be.

Other
Bantam Bagels (283 Bleecker Street between Jones and Barrow Streets), which sold tiny stuffed bagel bites has closed but a sign on the door promises a return. Prettles, a Los Angeles based lingerie shop, is featuring a pop-up at 66 Greenwich Avenue (near 7th Avenue) where previously lingerie store The Great Eros used to be. The pop-up will be there until the end of September and carries their “Original Baby Tees” which are tight-fitting, French-cut tees. French bakery Marie Blachère (301 6th Avenue near Bleecker Street) was briefly shuttered by the Board of Health, but it has now re-opened.

Photos by Danielle Smolian.
A View from the Kitchen

By Isa Covo

So, how are you enjoying this summer? Are you traveling? Going to the beach and walking on the scorching sand? Do you have to go to work stranded on the stifling subway platforms before squeezing into the somewhat air-conditioned compartments of the train that takes you to your destination feeling sticky and disheveled? Too many days have been bad hair days; I can vouch for that.

It has been hot. Very hot. And unless it is necessary to go out, I try to stay home where there is always something to do, things to read, and things to think about.

This month I want to talk about four of my favorite female blues and jazz singers, all gone now, alas, but whose voices are still thrilling. For each of them I have listed some titles, which are just a fraction of their rich repertoires, so, please go beyond those and listen to as many as you can find.

BILLIE HOLIDAY, by all accounts, was born into a dysfunctional family in Philadelphia in 1915. Her father, Clarence Holiday, played banjo and guitar and, for a time, played with the Fletcher Anderson orchestra. Her parents separated and she lived with her mother (who remarried) in Baltimore. In 1928 she and her mother moved to New York, and after three years of just trying to survive, Billie found a job in a nightclub in Harlem. She was sixteen.

Billie did not have a formal musical education and, apparently, could not read a score, but she had an instinct for music. “Lady Day,” as she was nicknamed, had an extensive and varied repertoire. I saw her on stage once, in her later years, and what I saw was a delicate, fragile woman, looking a little lost, but I could also see that she was a trouper when she sang. Her most famous song, almost her signature, was “Strange Fruit” written by Abel Meeropol, the adoptive father of the Rosenberg children, who had witnessed a lynching in the South. Listen to her on “Good Mornin’ Heartache,” “‘Trav’in Light,” “I Cover the Waterfront,” “One for My Baby,” “Moonlight in Vermont,” “What a Little Moonlight Can Do,” “Stormy Weather,” “ Ain’t Misbehavin’ and many other songs, ballads and upbeat ones, all worth listening to.

ELLA FITZGERALD, born in 1917, lived to be 79 years old, and her career spanned 60 years. She had a very wide vocal register and sang in many styles; she even sang a Gilbert & Sullivan composition on a TV show.

Her first hit, “A Tisket A Tasket,” was a song she co-wrote, and her first break was to be in Chick Webb’s orchestra (Webb was a mentor to her). Ella was bright, talented, and a quick learner. But, apparently, she was also shy; she never liked to talk about her life or herself. Her career really took flight when impresario Norman Granz became her manager. Granz was the producer of Jazz at the Philharmonic, and Ella was a member of the orchestra. In the 1940s Granz created Verve Records and Ella recorded numerous albums with songs in various styles from various American composers, almost all of whom were immigrants. Her upbeat, fun delivery always puts me in a good mood.

Some of the songs I enjoy are “How High the Moon,” “Mack The Knife,” “Stairway to the Stars,” “Dream a Little Dream of Me,” “Taking a Chance on Love,” “Let’s Do It,” and many more.

Ella performed around the world—throughout Europe and as far away as Australia—and always enjoyed success. She was active well into her seventies, although she had serious health problems, and her complete biography, even abbreviated, is too long to include here but you can read it online along with a list of her songs.

SARAH VAUGHAN was born in New Jersey in 1924. Both of her parents were musically inclined. She took her first piano and organ lessons when she was seven years old.

At eighteen, Sarah won an amateur contest at the Apollo Theater and was hired as a singer and second piano-player for the Earl Hines orchestra. A year later she joined the orchestra of Billy Eckstine, which brought her into contact with the musicians Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker.

She was a contralto with a very wide range and was considered one of the great jazz singers. Her fame was extensive and international, and she toured in Europe and the U.S. She recorded for Mercury Records and also appeared in three movies.

Sarah was an elegant woman with a lot of charm and was nicknamed “Sassy.” She recorded numerous songs and jazz tunes, upbeat as well as ballads. Among my favorites are “Misty,” “That Lucky Old Sun,” “The Man I Love,” “They All Laughed,” “Poor Butterfly,” and her closing song “Send in the Clowns.” There are many others, of course, and when I listen to her delivery I imagine that they should be listened to with a cocktail in hand in a chic establishment.

Sarah died in her sixties from lung cancer in 1990.

So, relax, have a cold drink, and listen to the music of these wonderful singers.

Piperade Basquaise

By Isa Covo

Like all regional recipes, the Piperade has several versions: sweet green peppers or green and red peppers, with eggs or without, more or less onions, parsley or not. What is certain is that because it is a dish that originated in southwestern France on the border with Spain, it uses ingredients reminiscent of Spanish tastes. It can be served as a first course, or as lunch, or for a light dinner. I prefer to serve it as a main course as I find it filling. Adding a green salad and fruit or ice cream makes for a very satisfying meal. My version, taking inspiration from several cookbooks, is below.

PIPERADE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sea salt</th>
<th>8 large eggs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 lb. sweet green peppers, or a mixture of green and red ones</td>
<td>8 oz. ripe tomatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 jalapeno</td>
<td>1 cup chopped onions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 garlic cloves, minced</td>
<td>4 garlic cloves, minced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 tablespoons vegetable oil</td>
<td>½ teaspoon sugar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 sprigs thyme, 2 sprigs of rosemary, 1 bay leaf tied in a piece of cheesecloth</td>
<td>4 tablespoons Italian parsley leaves, minced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 thin slices of Bayonne or Iberico ham, or prosciutto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Wash and seed the peppers; remove the white membranes and cut them into two-inch-long strips. Seed and remove the membranes from the jalapeno and mince.
2. Peel and seed the tomatoes and chop them coarsely.
3. Prepare the onions and mince the garlic.
4. Sauté the onions in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat, three-four minutes, stirring them until they become translucent and color slightly. Add the minced garlic and continue sautéing for one more minute.
5. Add the peppers, including the minced jalapeno, and stir into the mix. Add the tomatoes and the cheese cloth with the herbs. Mix gently and lower the heat to medium low. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent scorching. Uncover the pan and continue cooking until all the water from the vegetables has evaporated. Mix in the chopped parsley. Season with the salt and sugar.
6. While the vegetables are cooking, break the eggs into the bowl of an electric mixer and beat them until they thicken, become very pale, and triple in volume.
7. Once the vegetables are ready, set the heat to low, and pour the eggs over them and fold the eggs until they are completely mixed with the vegetables and no trace of eggs is apparent; continue cooking for two-three minutes. The mixture must be lightly frothy.
8. Distribute the piperade into four plates and top each serving with a slice of the ham.

Yield: 4 servings.

Note: The above preparation is a little different from the more traditional one. Here, the eggs are whipped as for an omelet and then poured over the vegetables and stirred gently with a wooden spoon to mix them with the vegetables and scramble them. Do not overcook.
Troy Conyers, “Keeper of the Karan Kingdom”

By Allyn Freeman

The address bespeaks good luck and good fortune: 711 Greenwich Street at the southeast corner of Charles and Greenwich Streets. For decades, this spacious building served as a parking garage, and then, for a few years, it was converted into a paper-recycling center. In the late 1990s, it was sold, and the initial rumor of the new owner, a music studio; a neighborhood horror, where loud heavy metal bands would record all hours of the day and night.

Instead, reality witnessed an attractive architectural conversion, a renovation planned with consideration and great care, preserving and expanding the one-story building’s brick facade without a hint of future commercial purpose. Handsome lead windows replaced street-level garage doors. A second-floor bricked space with twenty-foot ceilings was added featuring an arched glass window, and outside on the open terrace, a well-planted Japanese garden.

The sign on the door read: “Stephan Weiss Studio.” He was a noted painter and sculptor recognized also as the husband and partner of famed clothing designer Donna Karan. Weiss, an abstract painter, exuded a quiet refinement, a bona fides gentleman. Sadly, after a seven-year battle with cancer, Sadly, after a seven-year battle with cancer,

Karan. Weiss, an abstract painter, exuded a quiet refinement, a bona fides gentleman. Sadly, after a seven-year battle with cancer, Sadly, after a seven-year battle with cancer, Sad...
Olive Oil continued from page 16

In order to claim the EVOO label, the oil must meet both a chemistry standard and a sensory one. There is a slew of regulating bodies designed to raise awareness of the goodness of EVOO and to inspect quality control. A few are IOC, NAOOA, COOC, AOA and EVA. They provide authentications when an EVOO meets their standards. It's good to know these organizations are out there and all are worth googling.

Of course, there are other reasons why you'd want to get the “good stuff.” True extra virgin olive oil is loaded with powerful antioxidants (specifically polyphenols), monounsaturates, and nutrients, some of which have been shown to destroy cancer cells, ease arthritis pain, contribute to cardiovascular health, stave off Alzheimer’s and even, a focus of the conference, to combat diabetes. In fact, the Mediterranean diet was recently ranked #1 for preventing diabetes and heart disease.

So how can you ensure you’ve got a good olive oil? First, be aware of the common shopper misconceptions. “Refined” sounds like a good attribute. Not so in EVOO. Refined oil includes chemical additives which alter taste and remove the positive attributes from the product. Refined oil is not EVOO. Also, olive oil has a shelf life. After two years, it’s not even considered EVOO. Look for a harvest date rather than a “best by” date, as there can be gaps between harvesting and bottling. And “light” olive oil isn’t what you may think. It is not lower in calories or fat. Light refers merely to color, flavor or aroma. Also, it should be understood that “unfiltered” oil is incredibly good for you (even more polyphenols!) but must be consumed quickly because the fruit particles can ferment. Next comes your role in EVOO quality control.

The Care and Feeding of EVOO: Since UV light, heat, and oxidation degrade the quality of this rather finicky fruit juice, buy/keep EVOO in a dark bottle or opaque tin, store it at 65°F (not where it probably is—near your stove), keep it in a tightly sealed container.

Sipping olive oil out of a tasting glass is fascinating—and loads of fun to learn how to do properly. However, for me, the single-most mind-blowing experience of the entire conference happened during lunch. The first course listed a “roast eggplant—heirloom cherry tomatoes—petite chicory-basil ricotta mousse tart” (basically, a fancy bruschetta). But there were two on each plate. One was dressed with a premium EVOO brand while the other was prepared with the foodservice’s “house” EVOO. The difference changed my mind—firmly and forever—regarding finding and serving premium extra virgins. One tasted like a good upscale bruschetta. The premium oil recipe was extraordinary, the clear winner in highlighting the flavors of the fresh veggies.

Now, my newly appointed oleologists, go forth and conquer the culinary world!!!
For Every Season

By Keith Michael

…tern, tern, tern.

It’s hot out here.

A moment ago, when I offered Millie a treat to join me for this walk to Hudson River Park, with classic corgi insolence she raised her head from her chill spot under the air conditioner, inches from her water bowl that might jingle with the ice floating there if she bothered, and squinted at me as if to say, “Are you crazy?” Probably an apt appraisal.

The A/C is nice, but on a summer Sunday afternoon, I am hoping to be entertained by Common Terns fishing from the promenade railing in the park. Remarkably agile aviators, they can sprint and pivot in the air, swoop, hover in place like helicopters, fly with their heads upside-down, and they are one of the elite migration marathoners—flying 8,000 miles (one way) to southern Argentina for their winter holidays. I’ve ventured to the park, water bottle in hand, looking forward to watching another entry in their aerial repertoire: diving for fish.

Though the Common Tern is state-listed as threatened by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, New York City has at least two healthy nesting colonies: several thousand pairs inundate the dunes of the Breezy Point peninsula in Queens during the summer, and a smaller but still feisty number of pairs have become regular homesteaders on the Governor’s Island decommissioned Buttermilk Channel piers.

Aerodynamically evolved, a tern looks like a tiny, more graceful gull with a sleek white body (the better camouflage for the fish peering upward from the water, my dear), wings curved like scythes, a deeply forked tail (like the stabilizing tails of a kite), a tidy black cap, sparkling black eyes, and bright orange-red bill and legs.

Ah, there’s a Common Tern now—right on the railing as expected. It looks sharply right and left, then to the water, and glides precipitously down over the river. Showing off all its moves, this tern banks and zigzags above the waves, then effortlessly gains altitude like racing up on an aerial rollercoaster. At last, it displays its specialty. With eyes focused below, it holds itself still above the brine with rapidly flapping wings, then tucks and plunges straight down in a daredevil plummet with barely a splash in the water.

Alas, the tern has come up without a prize, and is off to try again.

This bird is likely a tourist from Governor’s Island. I see a flash of bands on its ankles, which means that it might have been captured there, banded, and will be tracked for its hemispherical whereabouts. Still, I ponder in wonderment at the energy expended on the flight from its family out in the New York Harbor, multiple coursings along the west side piers, and repeated plunges in pursuit of one silver fish to deliver back to Governor’s Island for a waiting, screaming toddler. That’s nearly a 10-mile round trip. Meanwhile, the second or third toddler continues to below, “What about me?!” What parents won’t do!

Any day now, one’s likely to see “Fishing School” commencing here on these piers. Terns have to be taught to fish, and the fledglings are none too happy about it. After having all of their meals flown in fresh direct for weeks, suddenly Mom and Dad turn the table and say, “Look sweetie, eventually you’ve got to do this for yourself.” Needless to say, this pronouncement is not met with much wing-snapping applause.

Watching the essentially sullen teenagers, hunkered down on the pier railings, glowering as Mom or Dad “shows them the technique,” then trying it out for themselves (often punctuated by humiliating belly-flops—not Instagrammable moments), well, it’s a time for interspecies generational empathy for all concerned. But these youngsters will learn how it’s done and this October they will be flying south with their elders that 8,000 miles to Argentina! Imagine.

While I’ve been rambling on, that tern has made a half-dozen more dives, and finally has come up with one wiggly silver sand lance fish (at least that’s what it looks like) and, immediately, the tern heads south with its protein-rich treasure.

The sun is still bearing down, my shirt is drenched, and I’m thinking, in admiration, about Millie’s strategy of hanging out under the air conditioner. Maybe a nap is next on my agenda for the day.

Visit keithmichaelnyc.com for the latest schedule of New York City WILD! urban-adventures-in-nature outings throughout the five boroughs, and visit his Instagram @newyorkcitywild for photos from around NYC.
Caruso’s Quips
By Charles Caruso

You can do anything they can’t stop you from doing.
A man who calls a woman ‘baby’ doesn’t know much about women—or babies.
Some people are jelly, some are jam.
Power complaint: These outages are outrageous.

Dallas was a much greater shock than Pearl Harbor or 9/11.
Dallas involved someone we knew, or thought we knew.
Most Pearl Harbor and 9/11 victims were strangers.

Hudson River Park has spent almost two years repairing a damaged seawall between Pier 40 and Pier 45 (Morton St. and Christopher St.), looking south toward Pier 40, paid for with Federal funds. It is now open for enjoyment. Not only were pavers and railings replaced, but the grassy lawn, wood benches and relaxing landscaping are completely new, and the splendid fountain is repaired. Photo by BJ Pape, AIA.
Landmark Preservation Today

By Brian J. Pape, AIA, Architecture Editor

The loss of the original NYC Penn Station caused citizens here to focus on the importance of our monumental buildings and special historic homes being lost. But the movement to preserve special places grew. Economic and population pressures continued to threaten our historic fabric, from Plymouth Rock to Civil War cemeteries, and from civic buildings to “house museums.” As the struggle evolved, federal and state tax credits were awarded to buildings and projects that would preserve community and national treasures, often for completely new uses, extending their practical lives by generations. Along the way, court decisions upheld the constitutionality of placing certain restrictions on special places.

NYC has been a pioneer in historic preservation! The Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) is the largest municipal preservation agency in the nation; it was created in 1965 to promote the preservation and use of historic districts, landmarks, and interior and scenic landmarks, for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the people of the city, and to strengthen the economy of the city.

LPC is responsible for protecting places that represent New York City’s cultural, social, economic, political, and architectural history by granting landmark or historic district status, and regulating them after designation. There are currently more than 36,000 protected sites in New York City, most of which are located in 144 historic districts and historic district extensions in all five boroughs. The total number of protected sites includes 1,415 individual landmarks, 120 interior landmarks, and 11 scenic landmarks. Anyone can search for districts or landmarks by visiting http://www.nyc.gov/landmarks.

The New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation, a non-profit organization, was established in 1980 to support the LPC and foster public awareness of preservation through educational outreach. The foundation sponsors the Bronze Plaque Program, Historic District Markers Program, and Street Sign Program, denoting historic districts in the five boroughs of the city. For more information, their website is www.nylpf.org.

Proposed rule changes approved and adopted: the commission approved amendments to some of its existing rules, effective as of January 22, 2019, and also adopted new rules to increase transparency and efficiency for members of the public who file for permits with LPC, and to community boards and preservation groups who weigh in on these projects. The robust year-long public process, including two public hearings, public briefings, and four months of comment periods, helped inform the final revisions. The rule changes streamline LPC’s process for approving everyday work on designated properties and encourage support for landmark designations by making the commission’s policies and practices clearer. Calendaring is the first formal step in the designation process; once calendared, LPC will hold a public hearing on the proposed designations at a future date, followed by a public meeting during which the commission will vote on the designation.

Greetings from the Chair Sarah Carroll: We have been active identifying opportunities to designate the most significant representations of the historic development of our great city and to recognize the people and places that have contributed to that history. We also continue to refine how we regulate to further improve the efficiency and transparency of our regulatory process, and are out in communities educating and promoting preservation as a vital part of what makes this city so special.

Preservation works best when we have a productive relationship with all stakeholders involved. I look forward to working in partnership with property owners, preservation groups, community boards and elected officials to promote preservation as a norm and ensure that the buildings and places that make this city so special and reflect its history are preserved and remain a vital part of New York’s future.

Wishing you all the best,
Sarah Carroll

To get news or questions answered, email requests to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, http://www.nyc.gov/landmarks.

Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED-AP, is an architectural consultant in private practice, serves on Community Board 2 in Manhattan, and is co-chair of the American Institute of Architects NY Design for Aging Committee.
What’s Happening at Clarkson Square?

By Brian J. Pape, AIA
Architecture Editor

Chances are you don’t recognize the name, but in the real estate world you can choose any name you want for your projects or even for whole neighborhoods. Witness the One Morton Square moniker from a few years back and, now, the West SOHO label for Hudson Square. Whereas one used to expect an open space of a specific shape to be called a “square,” now any intersection can be so-called—thus, Clarkson Square.

Clarkson Square is a mixed-use development of 1.7 million SF in design by COOKFOX Architects, filling the entire block from Houston to Clarkson Streets and Washington to West Streets. According to their website, its diverse mix of living spaces includes critically needed affordable housing, flexible units for senior citizens, and market-rate housing which will provide filtered fresh air, biodynamic lighting, and access to public and private garden terraces. The inspiration for the design, at street level, was the architectural detail of the historic Hudson Square factories and printing press buildings. Rick Cook and Mark Rusitzky head the project team at COOKFOX Architects.

You may recall that in mid-December of 2016 the city council approved plans for Atlas Capital Group and Westbrook Partners to proceed to develop a 1,586-unit mixed-use complex at what was then called 550 Washington in Hudson Square (the St. John’s Terminal site ca. 1933). The plans allowed acquisition of $100 million worth of air rights development (200,000 extra square feet) from the Hudson River Park Trust’s Pier 40 located across West Street.

Oxford Properties Group, the real-estate arm of Ontario’s municipal employee pension plan, bought the southern part of the three-block-long property in January, 2018, from Westbrook Partners and Atlas Capital Group for about $700 million. COOKFOX Architects is also responsible for Oxford’s development of an industrial loft-type office building, with nine stories added above an existing three-story structure, totaling 1.3 million square feet. The site currently has manufacturing zoning which allows for office use and hotels, but not residential use.

Westbrook Partners and Atlas Capital Group retained the block between Clarkson and Houston Streets; and with that end of St. John’s demolished they could build a 430-feet high residential tower, as previously approved in 2016. Thirty percent of the units (475 apartments) were to rent at below-market rates through a housing lottery; part of the tower was to be geared towards “older tenants.” There would also be retail space and a possible 15,000-square-foot recreation center. Strangely, no new renderings have surfaced since those 2016 approvals.

On July 13, 2019, Alphabet, Google’s parent company, closed the final deal on “Google Hudson Square,” a $1 billion 1.7 million-square-foot company campus at 550 Washington Street, set to be ready by 2020. This will be, of course, in addition to Google’s current headquarters at 111 Eighth Avenue (purchased in 2010) along with the $2.4 billion-square-foot company campus at Chelsea Market and 250,000 square feet to be leased at the Pier 57 restoration, a landmarked property at West 15th Street. You’ve heard of “Silicon Alley,” perhaps we should label this area “Silicon Shore?”

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Architecture Editor

Chances are you don’t recognize the name, but in the real estate world you can choose any name you want for your projects or even for whole neighborhoods. Witness the One Morton Square moniker from a few years back and, now, the West SOHO label for Hudson Square. Whereas one used to expect an open space of a specific shape to be called a “square,” now any intersection can be so-called—thus, Clarkson Square.

Clarkson Square is a mixed-use development of 1.7 million SF in design by COOKFOX Architects, filling the entire block from Houston to Clarkson Streets and Washington to West Streets. According to their website, its diverse mix of living spaces includes critically needed affordable housing, flexible units for senior citizens, and market-rate housing which will provide filtered fresh air, biodynamic lighting, and access to public and private garden terraces. The inspiration for the design, at street level, was the architectural detail of the historic Hudson Square factories and printing press buildings. Rick Cook and Mark Rusitzky head the project team at COOKFOX Architects.

You may recall that in mid-December of 2016 the city council approved plans for Atlas Capital Group and Westbrook Partners to proceed to develop a 1,586-unit mixed-use complex at what was then called 550 Washington in Hudson Square (the St. John’s Terminal site ca. 1933). The plans allowed acquisition of $100 million worth of air rights development (200,000 extra square feet) from the Hudson River Park Trust’s Pier 40 located across West Street.

Oxford Properties Group, the real-estate arm of Ontario’s municipal employee pension plan, bought the southern part of the three-block-long property in January, 2018, from Westbrook Partners and Atlas Capital Group for about $700 million. COOKFOX Architects is also responsible for Oxford’s development of an industrial loft-type office building, with nine stories added above an existing three-story structure, totaling 1.3 million square feet. The site currently has manufacturing zoning which allows for office use and hotels, but not residential use.

Westbrook Partners and Atlas Capital Group retained the block between Clarkson and Houston Streets; and with that end of St. John’s demolished they could build a 430-feet high residential tower, as previously approved in 2016. Thirty percent of the units (475 apartments) were to rent at below-market rates through a housing lottery; part of the tower was to be geared towards “older tenants.” There would also be retail space and a possible 15,000-square-foot recreation center. Strangely, no new renderings have surfaced since those 2016 approvals.

On July 13, 2019, Alphabet, Google’s parent company, closed the final deal on “Google Hudson Square,” a $1 billion 1.7 million-square-foot company campus at 550 Washington Street, set to be ready by 2020. This will be, of course, in addition to Google’s current headquarters at 111 Eighth Avenue (purchased in 2010) along with the $2.4 billion-square-foot company campus at Chelsea Market and 250,000 square feet to be leased at the Pier 57 restoration, a landmarked property at West 15th Street. You’ve heard of “Silicon Alley,” perhaps we should label this area “Silicon Shore?”

Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED-AP is an architectural consultant in private practice, serves on Community Board 2 in Manhattan, and is co-chair of the American Institute of Architects NY Design for Aging Committee.
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Abolishing the Senate

By James Lincoln Collier

It hardly needs to be said that the United States government is today so riven by conflict that it can no longer function. Liberals are at war with conservatives, Republicans are at war with Democrats, the president is at war with everybody. In most parliamentary democracies the voters choose a legislature and the legislators choose an executive—president, premier, prime minister. This ensures that the government will usually be united and can get down to business, although of course there are always moments when rebellious legislators decide to chart their own course.

In the United States, government is frequently divided. Currently, the Republican president is faced by a Democratic House of Representatives and is supported cautiously by a Republican Senate, making it difficult, if not impossible, to get any business done.

Especially problematic is the Senate. The original intention of most of the Founding Fathers was to create a legislature which would be the dominant branch of government—they had had enough of kings. They established under the Articles of Confederation a single legislature with equal powers for all states.

But right from the beginning, cracks in the edifice began to appear. For one, there was then powerful Spain, which was attempting to colonize large sections of America. Most of the states on the east coast wanted to avoid war with Spain, but states that controlled western lands wanted them protected from the Spanish, which might mean war.

A major issue was how the new legislature was to be set up. Large states like Massachusetts and Pennsylvania wanted the legislature to be based on population—the more people you had, the more representatives you would have in Congress. The small states, like Rhode Island, saw that in this system they would be swallowed up by the big states, and wanted to have equal powers in Congress. The solution was to have two houses of Congress: one chosen according to population, our House of Representatives; and one giving the states equal say, our Senate with two senators from each state. (There were other reasons for devising this scheme.)

The system may—or may not—have made sense in the 1780s. It does not make any sense today. Consider the possibilities. As it happens, virtually all of the least populous states lie in a strip of land between the Mississippi River and the western edge of the Rocky Mountains. These some twenty states are home to about a tenth of the American population. However, they elect forty percent of the members of the Senate.

There is an added problem. For better or worse, the majority of Americans live in big cities and the suburbs surrounding them. This tendency is increasing because the new wave of immigrants are not filling up the empty spaces in Nebraska and South Dakota, but are pouring into metropolitan areas.

The result is that we have a Senate that is egregiously unrepresentative of the American population. If, on any important issue, the small states band together and pick up a few allies, which they could easily do, Congresspersons representing a tenth of the American population can thwart the wishes of the vast majority. If this minority of voters were in any way representative of the population as a whole, the system might be acceptable. But this minority is not. It is drawn almost entirely from a population that is largely rural, ethnically far less diverse than the majority in the metropoles, dependent for their livings from herding and farming, and politically far more conservative than the people as a whole. None of this is news to political scientists, historians and informed citizens who have contemplated the matter. The most obvious solution is to abolish the Senate. A second would be to divide the nation into, let us say, forty new electoral districts, each to have one senator. A more radical solution would be to do away with states altogether and cut up the nation in some more practical way. There are other possibilities.

Clearly, the people who now hold power are not going to make these changes. It is up to the voters to take matters into their own hands through new laws, a Constitutional Convention or other means. The question is, will they?

The Truth of the American Revolution

By James Henry

The American Revolution was fought over freedom... or was it? Tax-wise, the British colonists in North America had it pretty easy. That's why they came to the New World—to get away from the crowded over-taxed opportunity-starved Old World. The colonists had the opportunity to own land, enjoy the fruits of their labors and have a more prosperous life.

In the British American colonies, before independence, the cost of the colonial government was born by the English and not the colonies. Government at that time did next to nothing and consisted of just a garrison of troops and a Governor. But when the British began asking the colonists to foot the bill for the Crown to rule them, confidence in Crown dwindled. Even though greater servitude was over the horizon, the idea of sending money back to the British government ran contrary to their having come to the colonies in the first place.

So was the American Revolution fought over taxes? Yes, but it didn't lower them. The revolution was fought over the Sugar Act, the Molasses Act, the Stamp Tax, and the Intolerable Acts. A third of the colonists supported a revolt against England, a third supported the Crown and a third didn't care one way or another. In short, the revolution was fought over the optics whether the colonists should be paying the Crown at all. The result was that the colonies were now saddled with $80M in war debt and the first central bank, The First Bank of the United States, which was created to restructure and pay off the debt. In fact, George Washington, who was vocally critical of establishing a central bank and was expected to veto it, approved the creation of the bank in exchange for placing the capital of the new country next to his land. His land values skyrocketed as a result.

Just as the Revolutionary War ended, Alexander Hamilton, one of the leading Federalists, approached George Washington to overthrow civilian rule and establish himself as King of America with Hamilton as his key advisor. Fortunately, Washington declined Hamilton's proposal, but these Federalist voices became the dominant shapers of the new country and are the only perspective taught today about this period.

A loose confederation, the Articles of Confederation was created. The newly created states hardly agreed on anything, just as they still don't today. Within seven years of the war ending, the Federal Constitution was signed. We got a central bank, the predecessor of the Federal Reserve Bank, and a powerful Federal government. Many of the colonists argued against the constitution as a gaff power grab. These voices lost to history were the Anti-Federalists, whose writings are barely read by scholars today. They opposed the establishment of a new oligarchy that replaced the old British one and made the strongest arguments against state centralization in western history. It was due to the vocal complaints of Patrick Henry and other Anti-Federalists that led to the inclusion of the Bill of Rights into the Constitution that we cherish so dearly to the present and have a better future. As Patrick said: “I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past.”
(Why) Build a Full-Size Field on Gansevoort Park?

GANSEVOORT PENINSULA is a naturally occurring body of land being designed for new uses by HRPT. This view from the north shows a concept design for new sports fields and recreation; concessions are on the left, with West Street/10th Ave. beyond the left edge, and the FDNY Marine boathouse on the far right pier. Credit: JCFO image.

By Brian J Pape, AIA
Architecture Editor

A crowd of over 100 anxiously awaited the unveiling of new concept designs for the Gansevoort Peninsula part of Hudson River Park (HRP) on July 24. The joint meeting of the CB2 Parks Committee and the HRP Trust (HRPT) commenced at the new 75 Morton middle school cafeteria, overlooking Morton Street activity at nearly eye level. School PTA Co-president Stella Chang was the first speaker, emphasizing the needs of her school, like all the other schools in the neighborhood that lack adequate outdoor activity space, and pleading for HRPT to utilize this opportunity to provide desperately needed playgrounds. Students now commute two hours to be able to play on regulation fields at East River Park! This theme of desperation was to be repeated for the rest of the evening.

HRPT has held several community meetings this year and provided an online public outreach tool to get public input. As James Corner Field Operations (JCFO) stated in their report, the goal is “to access the water, design for resiliency and reinforce the...Estuarine Sanctuary as well as provide recreational amenities that are missing elsewhere” in HRP. JCFO went on to state “Sports fields and other programming not found elsewhere in HRP...”

A captivating slideshow of images for the new park space was then presented by Lisa Switkin of JCFO, and Mimi Hoang of nArchitects. Given site constraints for mandatory components around the edges of the 5.5-acre peninsula, the net area for placing recreation open spaces is about 3.5 acres, and the ground is now only a little above high-tide, not high enough to avoid flooding sea surges. Unstable soil and easements for a gas pipeline preclude expanding the perimeter with landfill, they reiterated, except for most of the west edge into the piling fields, where DDC will be adding piles, platforms and sheathing. This is an opportunity to capture some of the old pier spaces.

Several layouts were shown, and certain ‘core elements’ were repeated in each concept, such as the Whitney Museum-sponsored David Hammon’s “Day’s End” sculpture, a boat ramp and sandy play yard along the south edge, concession and maintenance utility buildings along the east street side, and a dog run adjacent to the FDNY driveway on the north edge. Both the north and south shorelines incorporate ‘salt marshes’ to buffer the ebbing tides and waves.

With these ‘core elements’, smaller fields were combined with a “River Gym” play equipment yard, a western ‘Promenade Picnic’ stretch, and a ‘Pine Grove’ in the SE corner. These latter elements are found at many other locations in HRP, even right next door at Pier 51, and are not priorities.

Finally, layouts with ‘core elements’ and a larger, U-13 size field were shown, but the audience pointed out that only an even larger U-14 field would meet middle and high-school regulation sports, which is sorely needed here. Petitions to HRPT, with over 2000 signatures, state that a 225’ x 360’ field was the HIGHEST priority for this site (JCFO Report). Although the presenters voiced several aesthetic reasons why they rejected the U-14 field, the audience insisted that the U-14 field needed to be kept, as an option, and not dismissed.

Noreen Doyle, Executive VP for HRPT, said that $50M is budgeted for completion of this part of the 4-mile-long park, thanks to increased capital funding from Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio. The adjacent Pier 55 is proceeding with its construction, and will offer a variety of cultural events in the amphitheater, with a most unusual landscape rising up to 62 feet in one corner. The landmarked and restored Pier 57, anchored by Google, will feature a food market and rooftop park and restaurant for park visitors about 30’ above the water.

At several points during the Q&A period, the information shared about design elements elicited spontaneous applause from the assembly, a noteworthy expression at a Community Board committee meeting. Yet despite a generally upbeat conclusion to this public hearing, several key issues have yet to be resolved: will the community get their highest priority full-size field? Will the park be protected from flooding damage? Will the important access to the water be improved?

The last “Concept Phase” community hearing will be in early fall, stay tuned.
Karen’s Quirky Style

By Karen Rempel

Confession time. I’m a shoe fanatic! I have a friend who decides what she’s going to wear on a given day based on which pieces in her remarkable jewelry collection she feels like displaying. For me, it’s all about the shoes. I will often pull together an outfit based on which of my dearest pair of heels I want to take for a walk. These Sophia Webster stunners are in my top five, but they are so special I only take them for a stroll to the fanciest events, or in this case, to the Bleecker Playground!

These shoes have a more interesting life than I do. The first time I wore them, to a gala at the Vancouver Art Gallery, people took more pictures of these shoes than of the art. Similarly, I made a friend at the National Arts Club because she wanted to take a picture of the shoes.

When the temperatures hit the 80s and 90s, New Yorkers start to melt. These three style mavens each tackle the heat with their own brand of insouciance.

Style on the Street: Sizzling the Heat

By Karen Rempel | Fashion Editor

During the photo shoot with Dusty Berke on Bleecker Street, a stylist driving by opened her car window to ask if the shoes are by Sophia Webster. They are simply so spectacular that people feel magnetically drawn to them. Including moi! It was love at first sight when I saw them at The Bay in Vancouver. But the price tag was so steep, I took a picture of the shoes and hoped that would satisfy my heart. To my great joy, when I returned a month later they were marked down 50 percent for an end-of-season sale. The price was still steep, but no longer in the stratosphere. On that happy day, the shoes became my dear friends. For this month’s look, I swapped out the original black suede and fur-ball ties with pale green ribbon to match the dress.

I found the vintage 1930s flower-print dress at Honeymoon Antiques. I saw the dress’s red piping and purple, magenta, and turquoise floral print, and just had to try it on. To my amazement, the dress fit me perfectly. The most incredible thing about this dress is that the puffy sleeves detach with zippers! The owner of Honeymoon Antiques told me the dress was from the 1930s, but I wanted to verify this for myself, so I checked the Vintage Fashion Guild’s website for tips on dating vintage clothing. The dress still has the original metal Talon-brand zippers. Zippers were used in women’s dresses beginning in the late 1930s, and sleeve zippers were used in the 1930s to 1940s, though center-back zippers weren’t commonly used until the 1940s. The label sewn in the seam of the dress says “A Junior Miss Registered Original Design, FOGA, 59A.” According to fashion historian Jonathan Walford, the Fashion Originator’s Guild of America (FOGA) was formed in 1932 to protect clothing designers from knock-offs. The guild operated from 1932 to 1941, when the Supreme Court determined that the Guild’s practices were monopolistic. This detective work places the dress in the late 1930s, or at the very latest 1941. I think Linda Zagaria would approve!

DEBONAIR: Native New Yorker and real estate consultant John Armand Bremont loves New York in the spring and summer, because the warmth is like a drug and everyone’s in a good mood. He sports a dapper navy suit with brass buttons and a pocket square folded in three peaks. His open-necked shirt is the only concession to the heat.

FLAIR: West Village author and actor John Gilman sports a vintage 1940s Champion Duke Kahanamoku Hawaiian shirt. He pulled it out of the bottom drawer for a casual summer garden party in The West Village, chillin’ with white wine and watermelon.

FLARE: Musician and vintage aficionado Lun Badi is rocking more vintage items than you can shake a stick at, including a Gucci bag with hot pink trim, Fendi sunglasses, a classic Guess jean jacket, and a flare-orange skirt-slip with pink lace trim. Lun scored these treasures at Beacon’s Closet, a vintage treasure store on West 13th Street.

Wooden Wonder

By Roberta Curley

If I could see posterity, I’d relinquish my identity, cork cerebral sacophony, and roll out schooner on a glass river to eternity.

my Hudson escape dismisses reality, deflects clouds capping crew, dredges silty ripples and dissolves shore.

Photo credit: Roberta Curley.
Hats On to Linda Zagaria!

By Karen Rempel | Fashion Editor

With her dark hair curving against her alabaster cheek in a 1920s bob, and her signature hat, Linda Zagaria is instantly recognizable. Influenced by the stars of the silver screen, her elegant dresses and constant pearls evoke the era between the wars. Her passion for the Art Deco period led her to assume the role of Vice President of the Art Deco Society of New York for over a decade, where she gained a reputation for palling around with a group of similarly clad vintage aficionados. Currently President of the National Arts Club (NAC), Linda is featured in Ari Seth Cohen’s book, Advanced Style, and she appeared in the documentary of the same name.

Everett Raymond Kinstler was Linda’s fellow NAC member and friend. Kinstler painted hundreds of portraits in his lifetime, including half a dozen US presidents. He appreciated Linda’s other-worldly style as well, and she was the subject of the final portrait Kinstler painted before his death in May of this year, at age 92. The portrait captures Linda’s charm, whimsy, elegance, and beauty, and of course, her hat! Linda speaks of their decades-long friendship with wonder. “I think their friendship brought a tenderness and poignancy to this final, personal portrait.”

A woman of both style and substance, Linda brings the skills and wisdom garnered in her professional career as an educator and school administrator to her leadership roles, and she has twice received the NAC’s President’s Medal. An ardent Francophile, Linda is interested in the beauty of all art forms, including architecture, and she currently serves as the Executive Director of the Beaux Arts Alliance as well.

Linda believes that John F. Kennedy changed men’s fashion when he stopped wearing hats. "Before JFK, men always wore hats. But when JFK was inaugurated, he didn’t wear a hat. It was like It Happened One Night, the scene where Clark Gable takes off his shirt and he’s not wearing an undershirt. Well, the underwear industry tanked!"

Linda says that anyone can wear a hat if they try. She advises to consider the shape of the hat, the size of the brim, whether it is flattering to you. Also think about the occasion! Lately she’s started wearing 1950s hats as well. “They are very good if you’re going to the theater. Not in anyone’s way.”

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Why do Prescription Drugs Cost So Much in the U.S.?

By D. Cascardo, MA, MPA, CFP

Although many Americans have insurance that covers most of the prescription drugs they take, many more do not have any insurance or have ridiculously high co-payments with the plans they do have. Those who need to take “brand name” drugs rather than generics, may find those drugs are not covered or that the Tier requires a high co-pay. Pharmaceutical companies and their investors are quick to say that the costs of research and clinical trials required to find and test a new drug are the culprit. Then why is the research dependent on biotech, for-profit companies, rather than government researchers? Especially when the government mandates a new type of drug be developed for a new threat to the nation’s health (e.g., HIV, Ebola).

Developing a new “blockbuster” drug is expensive but can mean a big payday for pharmaceutical companies and their investors. Venture capitalists look to see what the potential market for a new drug is and will put money into developing what they hope the market (patients and their doctors) will demand. For instance, diabetes is rapidly increasing worldwide. The market is growing and companies that are developing new forms and/or administrations of insulin are attractive to investors.

The hypothetical venture capitalist thinking about whether to fund a biotech firm or a social media startup will make that decision partly on which venture may make the biggest profits, but WHY are drugs in the United States so much more expensive than their counterparts in other parts of the world?

Pick any brand name drug, and you’ll almost certainly find that the price in the United States is significantly higher than in other countries for the exact same drug. However, in the United States, the regulatory system is different. The U.S. government does NOT regulate or negotiate the prices of new prescription drugs. In other countries, a government agency will meet with pharmaceutical companies and haggle over an appropriate price.

Medicare, the large health insurance plan which covers millions of Americans over the age of 65, is expressly prohibited by federal law from negotiating drug prices or making decisions about which drugs it covers. Instead, Medicare is required to cover nearly all drugs that the Food and Drug Administration approves. This means that Medicare must cover drugs that aren’t being approved over what currently exists, so long as the FDA finds they’re safe for human consumption.

Government agencies in other countries will not only haggle over pricing, but will typically make decisions about whether new drugs represent any improvement over old drugs, or decide if they are even worth bringing onto the market in the first place.

Pharmaceutical companies in the U.S. know that as long as their products are safe, Medicare will buy them.

The result of this system is that Americans spend $858 per person on prescription drugs. That’s about twice as much as Australians and three times as much as the Dutch.

**WHAT WOULD PRICE-REGULATING DRUGS MEAN FOR PRICES IN THE U.S.??**

Presumably, prices would go down and we would spend less on prescription drugs. That could also mean that health insurance premiums wouldn’t go up as quickly—and may even decrease.

A United States agency that negotiated drug prices on behalf of the country’s residents would likely be able to demand discounts similar to those of European countries.

The Veterans Health Administration, which does negotiate drug prices, gets drugs that are usually 40 percent cheaper than what Medicare pays. However, it covers fewer products, so many patients who are eligible for Medicare also sign up for those plans to cover those prescriptions not available through the VA.

**WHAT ARE THE TRADE-OFFS?**

There would be trade-offs since every policy decision inherently comes with trade-offs. Most likely, insurance plans would not cover the wide variety of drugs now available.

Currently, the United States’ exceptionally high drug prices help subsidize the rest of the world’s drug research. Although we benefit with new and better prescription drugs, those benefits are also available to the rest of the world at lower, regulated prices.

Price regulation may mean there would be less research and innovation in drugs.

If there are fewer dollars spent on pharmaceutical research, there would most likely be less progress in developing new drugs for Americans and everybody else. If a national board made decisions about what prices were appropriate for drugs, it would need to have the ability to reject the drugs that didn’t make the cut.

Conversely, when the government mandates coverage of a new type of drug, there is more research and more clinical trials to develop that particular treatment. For instance, when Medicare began covering the flu vaccine for its millions of enrollees, there was a 2.5-fold increase in clinical trials for new flu vaccines since usage of the flu vaccine was guaranteed to increase. And an increase in the market would mean bigger profits for the manufacturers.

**INNOVATION vs ACCESSIBILITY**

If the United States began to price regulate drugs, medications would become cheaper. Price controls might lead to less investment in pursuing new cures in the future. Americans would have more access to drugs but could also expect a decline in research and development of new drugs.

Venture capitalists might find the risk versus reward is not worth backing start-up biotech firms, and big pharmaceutical companies may decide the potential return on investment is not worth the costs involved in bringing a new drug to market.

That might be okay. As a society, are we willing to trade some level of innovation to lower drug prices and make medication more financially accessible to those who need them right now? Should we forego windfall returns to big pharma and venture capitalists in favor of not forcing patients to choose between getting a prescription filled and buying groceries?

Debra Cascardo, M.A. M.P.A, C.F.P. is an award winning journalist and a Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine.

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Lizabath Scott, The “Hubba Hubba” Girl

By Robert Heide

August 6th is the date to mark down on your calendar to go to the air-conditioned Film Forum on Houston Street to see the one-day-only double bill in the Burt Lancaster Film Festival, which runs through August 15th, of Desert Fury and I Walk Alone, both starring my own favorite movie star Lizabeth Scott. In both of these pictures made in 1947, Burt Lancaster plays the heartthrob whom Scott falls hard and head over heels for. In my opinion this is a must-see special event for all film fanatics. Desert Fury (in Technicolor) has become a “camp” cult film among many film buffs due to its thinly disguised gay underpinning. Two gun-toting bad guys, played by John Hodiak and Wendell Corey, are holed up in a desert motel—and they play it as if they are gay lovers. Mary Astor and Scott play mother and daughter. They both have men’s names and they act as if they are a lesbian couple. In the middle of course, is Burt Lancaster playing the sheriff, whose job it is to straighten out all the confusion. Fortunately he is provided with a Chrysler woodie station wagon to drive around to the scenic desert locations while Scott has a convertible, which is also a Chrysler woodie. The bad guys drive a plain grey sedan. I Walk Alone is a black and white film noir about two bootleggers on the lam, played by Lancaster and Kirk Douglas, with beautiful, blond, aloof, and alluring Scott playing the femme fatale.

Lizabeth Scott had been an understudy to Tallulah Bankhead in Thornton Wilder’s The Skin of Our Teeth on Broadway and got her lucky break when Hal Wallis, the powerhouse director, was in the audience the night she went on for Tallulah. It was reported later, in a 1950s Confidential Magazine article, that she was Wallis’s mistress, in a story about a pajama party which had Scott kicking out her gay girlfriends with the announcement that Hal was on the way over.

For her first role in the patriotic war film You Came Along (1945), one authoritative columnist called her the “hubba hubba girl,” which was a tagline used in the film’s press releases. The phrase “hubba hubba girl, geez my ways! What do you say?” was from a popular forties song, and military men back from the war picked it up as a catchall flirtation line shouted out to pretty girls passing by. Known as “The Face of Film Noir,” the sultry, smoky voiced Scott was given a huge publicity buildup in the late 1940s, appearing on the covers of over 40 film magazines. She was cast opposite Hollywood’s top leading men, including in addition to Lancaster, Van Hefflin (The Strange Love of Martha Ivers, 1946); Humphrey Bogart (Dead Reckoning, 1947); Dick Powell (Fifty-Fifty, 1948); Dan Duryea (The Late Mr. Shaw, 1949); Charlton Heston, in two films (Dark City, 1950 and Bad for Each Other, 1953); and Paul Henreid (Stolen Face, 1952). To top it all off, Scott, who died at age 92 in 2015, appeared opposite a rock ‘n’ rollin’ Elvis Presley in Loving You in 1953.

Robert Heide is a playwright and the author, among many other books on the subject of American popular culture, of Starstruck—The Wonderful World of Movie Memorabilia, published by Doubleday and now available at Amazon.
When Buildings Sing

By Ananth Sampathkumar, Partner—NDNY Architecture + Design

Cesar Pelli, the world-renowned Argentinian architect, died on July 19 at the age of 92 in New Haven, Connecticut. The architect gained international acclaim for the Petronas Towers in Malaysia, a pair of skyscrapers 1,483' tall built from 1993-1996. The design combined Islamic iconography of the ‘Rub el Hizb,’ or two overlapping squares, with cutting edge technology to create the tallest buildings in the world at the time. Pelli’s firm has built other notable structures since then, including the Salesforce Tower in San Francisco and the North Terminal at Reagan International Airport, to name a few.

In New York, Pelli’s most recognizable buildings include the Pavilion at Brookfield Place, the Goldman Sachs Tower in Jersey City, New Jersey’s second tallest building, and to a lesser extent the Museum of Modern Art’s residential building in Midtown Manhattan.

Cesar Pelli’s contribution extended beyond architecture and into teaching as well. He was dean of the Yale School of Architecture from 1977 to 1984. The position was pivotal in Pelli’s decision to set up his practice in New Haven, Connecticut. Pelli co-founded his architectural studio with Fred Clarke at the age of 50, which is old even by architectural standards. Nevertheless, having been Eero Saarinen’s protégé, he was able to grow his business quickly and become one of the most influential architects of the late 20th century.

He was a well respected architect who was admired by his peers for his complex designs and attention to detail. During a lecture at the Design Museum, Pelli spoke about the proverbial music created by great architecture. His vision was for buildings that not only spoke but also sang to their audience. Pelli’s work is sublime and easy on the eye. His creations will continue to hum a quiet tune long after the creator’s demise.

The Middle East:
A Source of Love, Peace and Art

By J. Taylor Basker

Drones shot down by hostile powers, captures of tankers, divisive politics, threats of nuclear war, sanctions, kidnapping, bombs, beheadings—this is what we hear about the Middle East as Islamophobia in Europe and the U.S. grows. Yet, in Amman, Jordan this visiting Greenwich Village artist discovered a radically different situation.

I was invited to participate in the Cairo Amman Bank Art Symposium (CAB) by Mohammad Jaloos—artist and director of the CAB Gallery—the wizard who conjured this successful event with its amazing mix of diverse and talented artists from around the world.

Artist symposia are popular outside of the U.S. These events consist of approximately twenty artists who are invited by a patron—either government or private—to spend a week or longer painting together. Travel and living expenses are provided, as well as canvases, brushes and paint. The artists paint together all day, and dine and party at night. They are often toured to heritage sites in the area, meet local and international dignitaries, and receive good media coverage. The patron keeps one painting, which is shown in the closing exhibition; the artists keep the others. The symposium offers a magical experience, an island of creativity and dialogue among diverse people in an increasingly fractured world. It proves that art can not only reach the soul, but unites people divided in the world of politics.

What struck me was how different these attitudes were from those of most American artists, who often work in isolation, and jealously guard their techniques and style. Individualism, rather than a communal perspective, is the norm. When there are cliques of artists, they are often closed and exclusive. Yet the artists at the symposium were open and bonded closely, forming a support family that continued after the symposium ended.

Although I live in Westbeth, an artists’ community, I had never experienced such warmth, sharing and support from fellow artists as I did at the symposium. As a result, I painted one of my best pictures, titled “Ghosts of Palestine.” In the communal spirit of experimentation, I prayed and began dripping paint freely on the canvas and ended up with eerie imagery including faces emerging from blood red paint at the top and a dark line that was a mistake that occurred when the wind blew over my canvas. I turned the line into a chain leading to a small collaged photo of an Israeli bulldozer demolishing buildings in the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar.
**The Youth Orchestra of Milan Joins The Youth Orchestra of New York**

Two of what might be called the world’s most prestigious youth orchestras will come together on August 9th and 10th in joint performances here in New York.

From Milan, the home of Giuseppe Verdi, the Orchestra Sinfonica Junior (OSJ) joins The Children’s Orchestra Society of New York (COS), the youth orchestra founded in 1962 by Doctor H. T. Ma, the father of famed cellist, Yo Yo Ma, and is fiercely led by Yo-Yo’s sister, Dr. You-Cheng Ma. COS just celebrated its 50th anniversary at Carnegie Hall.

Giovani Consonanze is a youth orchestras exchange program created by Orchestra Sinfonica Junior. OSJ was funded and is currently directly supervised by the principal musicians of the Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Orchestra and Choir (LaVerdi) of Milan. Comprised of three orchestras (the Baby Orchestra for students between the ages of 6-9; the Kids Orchestra for students between the ages of 10-14; the Orchestra Junior for students between the ages of 15-18 and up), since 2010 OSJ has been active in several exchange experiences throughout Europe and Russia, shaping a festival, Giovani Consonanze, that every summer would bring together OSJ and a different foreign youth orchestra for a week of intense work and performances. This year’s partner and host for Giovani Consonanze is The Children’s Orchestra Society of New York City.

OSJ and COS will be working together with a joint faculty for 6 days (from August 5th to August 11th) and will bring their collaboration alive in two concerts. On August 9th the Faculty Recital at 7.30 p.m. at St. John’s in the Village (218 W. 11th St, New York), where some of the more advanced students will be joining the faculty’s ensembles; and on August 10th the joint orchestra symphonic concert at the Parish of Calvary at St. George (277 Park Avenue South, New York). Both concerts will offer free admission (donations only) and will present traditional classical repertoire paired with some more modern and folk music as well.

This Festival will be continued next summer, when COS will be in Milan accompanied by their conductor and faculty. The culmination of this educational project will be hosted in the prestigious Auditorium della Fondazione Cariplo in Milan which is also home to LaVerdi.
St. John’s in the Village

Enjoy these arts events in the fully-heated, air-conditioned, and ADA accessible St John’s (corner of W. 11th Street and Waverly Place). All concerts have an allocation of tickets free to seniors, but booking is essential. (admin@stjvny.org or 212 243 6192)

All bookings and reservations through stjvny.org

Ongoing throughout August:

GREGORIAN CHANT CLASSES WITH PROFESSOR LAWRENCE HARRIS

Friday, August 9— 7.30pm
MUSICA DA CAMERA

Musicians from a youth orchestra, visiting from Milan, Italy, team up with young NYC musicians to present a concert of chamber music. Free, but donations on the door would be appreciated.

Saturday, August 10— 7.30pm
AEON - NEW MUSIC NOW

AEON is a NYC-based ensemble specializing in contemporary art music. This is the ensemble’s St John premier. Their concerts have been praised for mindful, seamless, and above all electrifying, programming. $10, on the door only (no advance booking).

Sunday, August 4— 3pm
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

Mascagni’s charming ‘peasant opera’ begins in St Benedict’s Courtyard and moved into the church. Sung in the round, semi-staged. $20 ($10 concession).

Wednesday, August 14— 6.15pm
OUTDOOR PLAINSONG EUCHARIST OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, FOLLOWED BY DRINKS IN ST BENEDICT’S COURTYARD

This Eucharist, sung by visiting choral scholars from Australia, Canada, and elsewhere, is open to those of all faiths and of none. It is celebrated at the heritage-listed outdoor mosaic altar in the hidden St John’s Colony Garden (not normally open to the public) - one of the Village’s most ‘secret’ gardens. Free, but registration is helpful for catering purposes.

Thursday, August 15— 7.30pm
JAI HIND JAZZ

Celebrate the anniversary of the Independence of India with a concert of fusion jazz and traditional Indian music followed by a reception of Indian street food in the beautiful St Benedict’s Courtyard. $20. National dress is encouraged.

Saturday, August 17— 7.30pm
JOHN MELENDEZ IN CONCERT

Jazz pianist John Melendez offers up an eclectic menu of classics, jazz, and contemporary art music. $20. [This concert has no free-to-seniors allocation].

Friday, August 9— 7.30pm
MUSICA DA CAMERA

7PM ON SUNDAYS, following 11am Choral Eucharist & Sunday Lunch (basics class). Free.

7PM ON MONDAYS, following 6.15pm Plainsong Evensong (more advanced). Free.

To register, or for more information, email chantproject@stjvny.org

Saturday, August 3— 8pm
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

Saturday, August 4— 3pm
DIDO & AENEAS

Henry Purcell’s enchanting opera of the tragic history of Dido, Queen of Carthage. Presented by Vocal Productions NYC and the Strathmere Ensemble in an open-air performance in St Benedict’s Courtyard. $20 (all free-to-senior places have now been exhausted).

Tuesday, August 6— 8pm
SINGER-SONGWRITER & SPOKE WORD NIGHT IN REVELATION GALLERY

Local singers, songwriters, and poets share their work with one another and the general public in a cabaret environment. $10 on the door. BYO wine. Free to performers.

If you would like to perform contact Hannah (reimann.musicandfilm@gmail.com) our curator.

Enter the Gallery at 224 Waverly Place (no entrance through the church).

Visit stjvny.org for booking information
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