Turkish President Recreates Ancient Conquest

By George Capsis

I was a bit surprised at my own shock and, yes, anger when I read in the New York Times that the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had announced that the Turkish government would again take over the 1,500-year-old Hagia Sophia—also called Church of the Holy Wisdom—and use it as a mosque.

Turkish newspapers showed crowds cheering at regaining something they obviously feel is a part of their historic tradition going back to the surrender of the Byzantine Empire to the Muslim invasion in 1453, when Hagia Sophia was converted into a mosque and remained so until 1934 when it was made into a museum (it has been one of the most frequently visited museums in the world).

The enormous domed church marked the beginning of the Eastern Roman and Byzantine Empires and of the Christian era. Constantine was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity on his deathbed at his mother’s pleading.

The language spoken in Byzantium then, now Turkey, was Greek, of course, and many Greeks still live in Turkey, with families dating back centuries. One of those families is—or more correctly, was—mine.

Very soon after a Greek meets another Greek for the first time, the classic question pops up, “Where does your family come from?” If it is from the Peloponnesse, the largest segment of that island-frAGMENTED country, the answer might be “Langadia,” which is where my wife’s family came from (her maiden name was Geanacopoulos); but if you ask that question of a Greek whose family came from Turkey, he will answer, “My family is from Asia Minor,” because for a Greek the word Turkey is anathema (another Greek word).

The Capsis family came from a fishing village, named after Saint Paraskevi, which fronts the largest and most important harbor.

NYU Langone Health Opens New Outpatient Center in Greenwich Village

By Deborah Haffeman

Greenwich Village has a new healthcare provider in town. NYU Langone Health has opened a multispecialty outpatient care center, located at 555 LaGuardia Place, for adult and pediatric patients. NYU Langone Medical Associates—Washington Square spans approximately 10,000 square feet, which includes 26 exam rooms and a dedicated pediatric floor.

Village residents can now schedule an appointment with specialists in internal medicine, allergy and immunology, cardiology, gastroenterology, pediatric care, and physical medicine and rehabilitation through NYU Langone’s nationally recognized Rusk Rehabilitation. NYU Langone also plans to add specialists in family medicine, gynecology, interventional cardiology, and pediatric neurology later this year.

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Publisher's Apology

Dear Readers of WestView News,

I received three letters from our treasured readers regarding the poem “Code Blue.” I apologize to our community for offending and frightening some of you by publishing this poem. I am sorry to say that the poem slipped through the cracks three times, and was placed in the paper because it was the right length to fill empty space on the page. It wasn’t read carefully when we first received it, and it somehow missed the editing process that would have ensured a careful reading.

The paper is produced by volunteers and the Art Director was under tremendous stress in her personal life—and the pressures of getting the paper to the printer—and didn’t read the poem before placing it. I can see how this poem seemed disturbing and out of sync with the sentiment of our times. Indeed, even this poem seemed disturbing and out of sync with the sentiment of our times. Indeed, even this poem seemed disturbing and out of sync with the sentiment of our times. Indeed, even this poem seemed disturbing and out of sync with the sentiment of our times.

I offer sincere apologies and regrets. Thank you to those who wrote to me.

—George Capsis, Publisher

Remembering a Neighbor

I have been a West Village resident for more than 20 years and have been a fan of your newspaper until your June issue. On the second page of said issue, there was a small article entitled “Suicide at 45 Christopher Street.” I am shocked by the lack of compassion that was shown in this article to a beloved West Village resident.

First of all, the fact that the person who “reported” the incident to you seemed only concerned with having to “get it cleaned up” was appalling. Second, the fact that you sent a photographer to the scene tells me that you were just looking for a sensational photo, rather than truly trying to find out why our neighbor took her own life.

Third, the information your photographer received “from a friend who lived nearby” was incorrect on many points: the death was not reported to the police by a neighbor but rather by her bereaved husband immediately upon seeing her poor wife’s body below their window; she did not have the coronavirus, but she did experience the fear, anxiety and isolation that so many have felt during this quarantine; and to say that she had “mental problems”—an absolutely offensive description of someone’s mental-health struggles—completely trivializes and dismisses the fact that the last three months of dealing with this virus could easily have a negative—and even be fatal—effect on some people.

This was a woman who was very loved by family and friends, as well as many Village neighbors and shopkeepers. Everyone knew she was shocked when they heard of her suicide, because it was truly unexpected. She was a talented artist and teacher; she was a sage mentor to her many students and friends; she was a loving and supportive wife, aunt, sister and friend; and she loved the West Village and supported its people and businesses wholeheartedly. So to see such a vibrant member of this community lose her death—which was a direct result of the stress and depression so many have experienced during this virus—reduced to being about someone pissed-off over cleaning up the mess is heartbreaking. I guess I expected more humanity from you and from WestView.

—Debbie Troche

Hudson River Waterfront

To the Editors of WestView,

Brian Pape’s Then and Now description of the changes in the Hudson River Waterfront reveal a dynamic history in which travel played a major role. Initially, horses and wagons moved east and west between ships and warehouses. Then the north-south rail line connected these with cross river freight traffic, terminating at the St. John’s Park Depot built at Laight Street by Cornelius Vanderbilt in 1868. Brian points out Death Avenue where a horse mounted "cowboy" warned pedestrians and wagons out of the way of approaching trains moving at 6 mph. The elevated tracks, now known as the High Line, were built in 1934 by the New York Central Railroad to reach the St. John’s Rail Freight Depot as opposed to the St. John Truck Terminal on West Houston Street. Construction of the rail depot destroyed one of the city’s most beautiful parks, St. John’s Park, and destroyed 20 trees and the front porch of the elegant church that stood there until 1918. After building Grand Central Terminal, he abandoned St. John’s Park. The last owner of the railroad was Peter Obletz, a West Village resident who bought it from CSX Railroad for a dollar. With Congressman Jerry Nadler’s support he hoped to restore rail freight, but the industries that would use it were long gone.

Meanwhile, traffic to and from the piers conflicted with increasing traffic along the waterfront. Manhattan Borough President, Julius Miller, built the elevated highway to relieve this congestion. In my fifty years in the West Village it was always known as the Miller Highway. The elevated highway destroyed the West Washington Market where farmers sold produce brought across the river from New Jersey on car floats and rail lighters. The market was replaced by the Manhattan Refrigeration Company. The waterfront was losing its function as a seaport and began attracting residents who treasured the views of the harbor and Jersey headlands which were diminished by the highway’s appearance and noise. One day a loaded truck fell through the roadbed which became a favored bikeway for months before it was torn down and the Battery Park City Corporation took over the waterfront for residential and office development south of Chambers Street. In subsequent years, the Hudson River Park Trust was created to create and manage a public park from Chambers to 59th Street where only a few passenger ships still berth occasionally.

I thought that these additional facts might interest your readers and enrich the excellent account written by Brian.

—Barry Benepe
NYU continued from page 1

“This new practice brings NYU Langone’s comprehensive, quality care to Greenwich Village in one convenient location,” says Andrew Rubin, senior vice president for clinical affairs and ambulatory care at NYU Langone. “While we continue to expand our services throughout the region, we have a strong connection to this neighborhood in particular—the home of NYU’s Manhattan campus for more than 100 years.”

The new location enhances local access to doctors affiliated with NYU Langone, a national leader in high-quality outpatient care, with multispecialty services offered to help streamline care. Physicians can promptly refer patients to other specialists at the center for faster diagnosis and treatment.

NYU Langone has several outpatient care centers within walking distance of the Village that complement the services available in Washington Square. Their extensive network of physicians operate using a single, integrated electronic health record (EHR) system, called Epic, so up-to-date patient information and test results can be reviewed from any location and via the free NYU Langone Health app.

After months of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, residents may be wondering if it’s safe to visit a doctor’s office, even if it’s in walking distance.

“As we grow this center, we are mindful that we are doing so during the COVID-19 pandemic and there may be concerns about accessing care at this time,” says Rubin. “Our patients’ and staff’s wellbeing is our top priority, and we’re taking extraordinary precautions to ensure a safe environment, including following rigorous cleaning, screening, and mask-wearing protocols.”

To make an appointment or for more information about NYU Langone Medical Associates—Washington Square, call 212-460-5622 or visit https://nyulangone.org/locations/nyu-langone-medical-associates-washington-square.

If you are experiencing a medical emergency, like chest or severe abdominal pain, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. NYU Langone emergency care wait times are available online at https://nyulangone.org/

NYU continued from page 1

Liza Whiting, with great sadness, had to say goodbye to her beloved Mia who she adopted from Maltese Rescue when she was three years old.

Mia was trained at St. Vincent’s Hospital as a therapy dog and visited patients as they recuperated. After the hospital closed, Mia brought the same joy to residents at Cabrini Nursing Home in the Lower East Side and when that facility closed Mia participated in the children’s reading program at Jefferson Market Library.

She loved rides in the bike basket, running and playing in Central Park, posing and smiling for the camera with any prop Dusty could dig up for her monthly column ‘Mia Says’ and coming and participating in WestView meetings.

There will only be one Mia. Her joie de vivre, her big smile. We will miss her very much.

There will only be one Mia

I can still hear her slurping from Liza’s collapsible bowl, never declining a sip—tho longing to tumble and roll.

A “little lamb”—face full of hope, ears flip-floppy, eyes black and bold.

Six pounds of fluff, never glum nor gruff, Mia offered petters sensory pleasure.

Now she illuminates city skies—a beacon day and night. Her spirit enlivens Jackson Square Park. Bench sitters crave Mia’s pyrotechnic spark.

The pooch, stirred by vast Greenwich Village charm, knew she couldn’t dig roots on some upstate farm.

Her mojo mesmerized. Tho clearly “canine”—Mia’s humanity poured through. She barked and howled, and volunteered as a hospital therapy-dog.

WHEW! But chasing and chewing her small ball rocked Mia’s heart. She relished a wacky squirrel scuttle— even giving the rodent a head start.

Mia vanquished every attempted role: WestView mascot, model, and champion of inspiring quotes. Bless Mia’s “Maltipoo” paws as she circles back to a new watering hole.
The Architecture of Hagia Sophia

By Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED

Isidore of Miletus and Anthemius of Tralles were the two main Byzantine Greek architects that Emperor Justinian I commissioned to design the cathedral Hagia Sophia in Constantinople from 532 to 537. Hagia Sophia means Holy Wisdom. The church is also known as Ayasofya (Turkish), Sancta Sophia (Latin), and Church of the Divine Wisdom.

The original church on this site is said to have been built on the foundations of a pagan temple in 325 for Constantine I. The earlier Hagia Sophia, which was burned and destroyed in riots, would have been built mainly out of wood; the new one was of stone, “so that the church should no longer prove combustible.” It became one of the largest, most lavish, and most expensive buildings of all time, according to general consensus.

The architects innovatively combined the longitudinal structure of a Roman basilica and the central plan of a drum-supported dome in order to withstand the high magnitude earthquakes of the region. The Hagia Sophia was repeatedly cracked by earthquakes and then quickly repaired, eventually including the addition of eight Corinthian columns. After a great earthquake in 989 ruined the dome again, officials restored the church by rebuilding the dome with dome ribs and reinforcing the walls from the outside with four buttresses, in which condition the church remains today.

In a wholly original manner, its huge 32-metre (105-foot) main dome is supported on pendentives and two semi-domes, one on either side of the longitudinal axis. In plan, the building is almost square. There are three aisles separated by columns, with galleries above and great marble piers rising up to support the dome. The walls above the galleries and the base of the dome are pierced by windows which obscure the supports in the glare of daylight and give the impression that the “canopy” floats on air.

After the Turkish conquest of Constantinople in 1453 Mehmed II had the church repurposed as a mosque, and in 1934 Turkish President Kemal Atatürk secularized the Hagia Sophia as a museum. Art historians consider the building’s beautiful mosaics to be the main source of knowledge about the state of mosaic art in the time shortly after the end of the Iconoclastic Controversy in the 8th and 9th centuries. Many basilicas and mosques were modeled on the Hagia Sophia, including the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis (St. Louis MO).

The Hagia Sophia is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Hagia Sophia continued from page 1

John pulling the ropes.

Ankara had appointed an official guide who greeted us and took us to a seaside restaurant for a selection of the best dishes that Turkey had to offer; and they were all familiar to me, being Greek.

We then visited the Capsis ancestral home which was now just an oblong hole in the ground—nothing was left. But when I went into what must have been the cellar, I found a few bits of pottery which I hope are still in my own cellar as I write this.

Then we went to the family church where, I must assume, generations of Capsis family members had been baptized. It looked pretty much as all Greek Orthodox churches do, except for an odd amorphous structure at one end at a strange angle. (This was to signal the direction of Mecca—the church had been converted into a mosque).

When I got back to New York I received, fortuitously, an invitation to a reception at the Plaza Hotel for the very same Ozal, President of Turkey.

Before entering the main room where the reception was held, there was an elevated area above it from which one could make a grand entrance down a wide staircase and also have a view of the entire room below. The room was filled with Turkish men in navy blue suits, but in the middle there appeared a circle of brown uniforms with a sprinkling of navy blue (members of the army and navy were surrounding President Ozal). I made my way to the circle and walked through it until I encountered the short, plump Ozal who looked at me, smiling with a bit of surprise.

“I am the cousin of John Capsis,” I offered, as Ozal’s face lit up with pleasure. “And did he get home to his village?” Ozal demanded with a wider smile. “Yes, he did, and I went with him,” I replied. “And what did he think of Turkey?” the now beaming Ozal further demanded. I found myself saying... “The best Greek food we ever had, we were in Turkey.”
Hagia Sophia’s Conversion into a Mosque: A Violation of Orthodox Culture and History

By Anastasia Kaliabakos

The Hagia Sophia, a remarkable model for Orthodox churches and beautiful example of Byzantine architecture, has recently been in the news due to its sudden conversion from a historic museum to a mosque. Located in Istanbul, Turkey, this structure has stood the test of time, serving as a place of worship for millions of people and a beacon of hope to the Christian world. The conversion of the basilica to a mosque has angered and disappointed not only the Orthodox Christian community, but much of the world.

The first Hagia Sophia was commissioned by Emperor Constantius II and built in 360 AD. Back then, it was called “Magia Ecclesia,” meaning “Great Church,” due to both its incredible physical size and its influence as a place of worship. After the exile of Patriarch John Chrysostom, riots ensued, which resulted in the arson of the Magna Ecclesia. It was completely burned to the ground in 404 AD.

The second church was built in 415 AD, and was commissioned by Theodosius II. The design of this church differed from the first one in order to make it more stable and able to withstand attack. However, once again riots broke out in Constantinople, and the church was again burned to the ground. Some relics still remain from the church, such as soffits and columns.

In 532 AD, not too long after the destruction of the second basilica, Emperor Justinian I ordered the construction of the third and final version of the Hagia Sophia (a name which, in Greek, means “holy wisdom”). The construction of the church was a difficult and tremendous undertaking which involved a wide assortment of people and laborers (over ten thousand workers). The inside of the church was covered with porphyry, a stone that was widely used in churches and basilicas at the time (so much so that it has now become a very rare material) and golden mosaics. Various monuments depicting the strength of Justinian I were erected on the Hagia Sophia grounds. In 537 AD the Hagia Sophia was opened to the public once again. People all over the empire regarded the church as a sanctuary and safe place of refuge and worship, and it was treated as such for centuries.

In 1202 AD the Fourth Crusade began. Following the capture of Constantinople, the Crusaders ransacked and occupied the Hagia Sophia, converting it into a Roman Catholic cathedral. After the city was reclaimed decades later, the church stood desecrated, vandalized, and in need of repair. Emperor Andronicus II Palaeologus ordered the restoration of the church in the 1260s.

In the spring of 1453 Constantinople fell to an invasion of Ottoman forces. The Ottoman sultan, Mehmed II, ordered the unencumbered pillaging of the city for three days, as was custom after a victory. Hagia Sophia at first became a place of refuge for those who could not fight against the Ottomans—women, children, the elderly, and the sick. However, the church was not exempt from the looting, and the doors were battered open not long afterward. Not only did the Ottomans regard the physical decorations and monuments in the church to be the greatest valuables in the city, but they also considered the people inside as a source of labor. The weak and old were murdered and women and children were taken away as slaves. The people of Constantinople were forbidden from worshiping God, as the sultan declared, “There is no god but God, and Muhammed is his messenger.” The Hagia Sophia was subsequently turned into a mosque.

Centuries later, in 1935, Turkish President and founder of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, converted the Hagia Sophia into a museum. This action demonstrated Atatürk’s desire to respect all faith traditions and to take into account the diversity of thought that contributed to Turkey’s history—earning him the title “Father of the Turks.” Until today, the museum has been accessible to all and is recognized by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Over three million people a year go to the Hagia Sophia museum to learn about its rich history and its role in the world.

Recently, the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, formally changed the status of the Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque. This decision has disappointed citizens and politicians of all ideological backgrounds, from Vice President Joe Biden to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Biden said, “the Hagia Sophia is an architectural marvel and treasured holy site for people of many faiths. For the last 85 years, the Hagia Sophia has been a museum, allowing people from around the world to visit, admire, and pray in this holy space, which since 1985 has also had the status of a UNESCO World Heritage site.” AHEPA, the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association, condemns the conversion and hopes that the Turkish president will reverse his declaration in order to maintain the memory of the Hagia Sophia as a basilica and great feat of Greek and Byzantine architecture: “Hagia Sophia is a gift to all humankind. Its value is universal and it must be preserved as such.”
Helping Neighbors in Need

By Michael Duane Johnson

Throughout the entire shutdown of our City, The Church of the Village United Methodist Church located on the corner of 13th Street and 7th Avenue continued their ministry of hospitality by providing pantry and emotional support to thousands of New Yorkers seeking food for nourishment and human contact for others needing emotional support.

Two years ago I too was in need of food. When I entered the church sanctuary, while waiting for my number to be called, Pastor Jeff Wells allowed me to sit down at their grand piano and perform. The experience was so entertaining and enlightening I was invited to continue to bring Carnegie Hall quality music to New Yorkers that can’t afford to hear it otherwise. Today the Church of the Village is the only program that in addition to providing food also provides Music Therapy as part of an organic experience that also includes social services and voter registration.

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TERESA CONCEPCION, administrator for the food program, stands in front of volunteers at the Church in the Village, who hand out groceries and produce to approximately 800 homeless and unemployed every Tuesday and Saturday starting at 11:00am. Photo by Bob Cooley.

Historic Maps of Manhattan: 1865

By Brian J Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

I was asked to provide a follow-up with maps (of which there are many) showing some of the changes to our waterfront neighborhood. While focusing on the waterfront streets, comparing these timely maps gives an impression of the monumental developments that have taken place here and how many street names would be unfamiliar to us today because they were renamed over the years. To do justice to the maps and to the readers, we present one map at a time, so that the larger size is more legible. Each map captures a moment in the development of Manhattan. Reader comments are always appreciated.

1865: This map by Egbert L. Viele, for the Citizens Association, “by an Act of Congress in the year 1865,” was suggested by Aldo Brandino and is found at https://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov. It shows a color code for “Marsh” in dark green, “Made Land” in light brown, and “Meadow” in light green; dark blue is water, including the Collect Pond downtown. Sewers also get drawn out on the streets (not all streets have them). The amount of “Made Land” (inflated shoreline) is enormous. Greenwich Street follows the shoreline from Barclay Street up to Gansevoort Street in our area; there is no Gansevoort Peninsula, as that is all landfill west of what would be Washington Street. This map precedes the Brooklyn Bridge construction which began in 1870. Map Credit: https://www.manhattanbp.nyc.gov
Would the Chairman of the Board Please Step Up!

By Malcolm J. Bowman

Storm surges and sea level rise represent existential threats to the future well-being of New York City, coastal New Jersey and the south coast of Long Island. Superstorm Sandy was a rude awakening to the clear and present danger of how climate change and rising sea levels threaten the very existence of the city as we know it. More recently, the tragic effects of the coronavirus pandemic serve to remind us that the unlikely and even the unthinkable can and do occur.

This hurricane season continues as global temperatures rise to dangerous levels, leading to warnings of an above average hurricane season.

The Metropolitan New York-New Jersey-Long Island Storm Surge Working Group (SSWG), a professional association of scientists, engineers, urban planners and social scientists, continues to advocate for intensified objective scientific, engineering and environmental evaluation of the dire need for, and the construction of, regional storm surge barriers to stop extreme surges arising from hurricanes and winter nor’easters from pouring through the two portals to NY Harbor (the Lower Bay and upper East River) and flooding the city ever again.

We advocate for the restoration of funding for the US Army Corps of Engineers’ Harbor & Tributaries Study (HATS) which was abruptly cancelled just two months before the long-anticipated identification of a Tentatively Selected Plan that would have identified the leading alternatives for coastal storm risk mitigation for New York Harbor.

The absence of Army Corps funding leaves at a complete standstill the only region-wide effort with a scope appropriate to the scale of the challenges presented by future storm surges for at least the next 100 years.

This is a travesty of enormous dimensions and consequences. For several years the Army Corps has investigated several alternative proposals. HATS identified the most effective and most costly of these to be a regional system of offshore storm-surge barriers, with sea gates for navigation and tidal exchange, built far away from dense infrastructure. This alternative would block extreme surges from both the ocean and from Long Island Sound.

The least expensive but also least effective proposal examined was a limited string of onshore perimeter walls, some built as high as 17 feet above ground level.

In the absence of a regional strategy, ongoing municipal attempts to design local systems of perimeter walls and shoreline protection proceed in fits and starts. Virtually none of these have been completed: most are mired in controversy, cost overruns and delays. Many are of questionable effectiveness and would, to varying degrees, block views, limit waterfront access and disrupt urban life and property.

Fundamentally, storm surge and sea level rise are regional challenges requiring regional solutions. We need to evaluate and implement a hybrid system of barriers with movable gates to protect the region from the sudden acut—‘heart attack’ of devastating storm surges as well as a network of low onshore barriers to protect against the ‘chronic community-health’ issue of long-term sea level rise.

Bill Keller, former Executive Editor of the New York Times, wrote soon after Superstorm Sandy:

“The problem is not just that smart people differ wildly about what to do; it’s that the problem crosses multiple jurisdictions, that everything costs loads of money and that humans have short memories. The will to do anything ambitious tends to recede almost as fast as the tide surge”...

“The number of local, state, regional and federal agencies that have a piece of the action in disasters is paralyzing. Everybody is in charge, so nobody is in charge. This problem needs a chairman of the board.”

Time is short, political will has evaporated, funds are withdrawn and confusion and misinformation proliferates. Do we want New York City to last at least another 100 years? Then wake up, seize the moment and let’s move ahead to keep the city, livable, safe, vibrant and healthy. Would the chairman of the board, please step up?

Malcolm Bowman is a Distinguished Professor of Marine Science at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. He currently serves as the Chair of the Metropolitan NY-NJ-LI Storm Surge Working Group.

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THE 48,000-TON VIKING STAR transits the Thames Barrier during its maiden voyage. The Barrier has effectively protected London from the ravages of storm surges and sea level rise since 1984. A similar, enlarged design could protect New York City. Photo credit: Viking Ocean Cruises.

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Extended Summer

By Tom Lamia

It has been a strange summer in Maine. No stranger, perhaps, than yours in the West Village, but maybe a different kind of strange. I have spoken in this column before about the dependence of Maine’s economy on summer visitors. It is a well-known characteristic of life in Maine, whether for “Mainer” (those who are not “from away”) or year-round residents like me, that we reflexively withdraw from active life during the four-month season of summer visitors. That season, a four-month stretch from June through September, is one of two seasons unofficially recognized among Mainer—the other being the eight months of winter when we have Maine to ourselves. Winter is devoted to stoking the wood stove and hoping the generator has enough propane to keep the lights on and the pump pushing hot water through the heating system while waiting for the return of summer visitors.

This year, of course, is different. As news of the coronavirus filtered past the borders of New York and Massachusetts, and began to enter roadside conversations among Mainer and their neighbors from away (me), a particular phenomenon not heretofore known on the coast of Maine emerged. This phenomenon was new, but unsurprising, even expected. In its earliest form it was recognized as a logical and rational result of the catastrophe that was being described on national news programs. Summer visitors were going to start to arrive at any moment, it was said, even with snow on the ground. Reports from island communities and yachting enclaves told the tale of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other urban centers being abandoned by coronavirus-sensitive “canaries” seeking shelter in Maine where there was no virus. The canaries’ escape from peril, I was told, was to be facilitated by the happy circumstance of unoccupied summer homes in spacious, picturesque locations. Most of these homes were not winterized, but how cold could it be in March? I will tell you. My first visit to Maine was in May of 1968 to an island in the Damariscotta River where my future bride and I clung together close to a fireplace, the only source of heat, and learned the value of insulation (of which there was none). My boyhood (as I like to think of it) was spent in Southern California. Suppress your laughter; mid-winter in Los Angeles is cold enough to have forced my college fraternity house roommate (from Syracuse) to flee to warmer quarters one night in January when I left the window open. A few nights on that island tested my hardness for a Maine spring.

Those canaries did come, arriving intermittently but in ever-greater numbers from March to June. The presence of cars in driveways and bodies at the supermarket confirmed the invasion. Trepidation bordering in a few cases on outright hostility carried the message that Maine and Mainer were not yet ready for their presence. Cottages had not been made ready, boats were still ashore in their cradles awaiting scraping and painting, restaurants and bars were closed, gift shops were shut. Most disturbing of all, Mainer were terrified of getting close enough to these early birds to happily provide needed income-producing services. Moreover, Governor Mills and her advisory council had decreed, among other restrictions, that visitors must quarantine for 14 days after arrival. What good, after all, is a summer visitor who cannot move among us and make our economy hum?

Summer cottages, heated only by fireplaces did serve as a temporary escape from the infection zones, and the quarantine requirement has now been lifted for visitors from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The familiar signs of a summer season are now with us—normalized by concessions to the virus. Maine is near the bottom of the list of states with COVID-19 cases and deaths. Lobsters are plentiful and cheap. The weather is fine. The sailing, and the drinks and conversation at the end of the day, are at their traditional high levels. There will be a summer visitor season this year, however moderated, and all are happy, Mainer and visitors alike. Soon enough the visitors will be back home, where they might now feel safer, and Mainer will have the place to themselves for eight months.

The Police Culture Needs a Voice

By Bruce Poli

Earlier this year I was driving on 14th St. in the right lane. In the left lane was a police formation of several cars.

Suddenly a van was sticking out into my lane so I put on my left turn signal, waited for the right space between police cars, went around the van and was immediately pulled over by a police siren.

“A big fat cop approached me: “What the hell are you doing?” I pulled out my police card—given to me by my son-in-law who works in NYPD counterterrorism...

“What the hell is that?
“ ‘That’s my son-in-law”
“Does your son-in-law know you cut off cops?”

“I was just going around the van sticking out in my lane.”

Deferential, he let me go.

A few nights later I was having dinner with my daughter and son-in-law. He’s a Sergeant—refused to move up to Lieutenant—because he said it’s all corrupt from Lieutenant up. Instead he went sideways to counterterrorism and now heads a team.

“When I told him the story, expecting support and something like “Yeah, unfortunately there’s some really bad people in the NYPD,” instead I got, “Don’t you EVER cut in front of a police line?”

“A light bulb went off: He’s more protective and cares more about his own cult than his father-in-law’s support and empathy. WOW!”

“So I started to think, why do young people become cops?

“The answer is one word... or maybe you could say two.

“The second is service—to serve the public—which is an ideal.

“The primary word is BENEFITS—a short working life and then you and your family are taken care of for the rest of their lives. The union is strong, there’s overtime, early retirement and a generous pension, not to mention the Police Benevolent Association.

“It’s a Devil’s Bargain! These young people join the Force, get into the real world and—brace yourself—it’s a war.

“They create armor around themselves, get angrier and angrier (and fearful) as they become victims of hatred, sometimes violence and so often lack of respect. So the idealism fades and the pressure mounts from above to conform to Cop Culture. Or else!

“Problem is it’s their secret...they haven’t told the rest of us that it’s expected to allow a long police formation on the street to pass before you yourself are able to follow the natural motor vehicle laws. It’s the Police—so you have to wait and respect them...

“Or really?

“The arrogance, the power plays and the assumptions built into the downward curve of being in the Police Cult—and it is a Cult—are mortifying. But they are also reality and that is what we’re living with and fighting for and against in our current American society.

“My son-in-law is a Bernie Sanders liberal... hard to believe, but that allows me insight into the mind of the Police Cult.

“So what is our solution?

Black Lives Matter isn’t helping right now nor is the current national media.

Community police meetings are great, but very ineffective and short-lived in the long run.

Reality...oh yes, that magnificent word... is that the Police Culture Needs a Voice.

“How can we respect the police unless the police respect us?

“I’m not referring to race, I’m referring to the world at large. Us, the ‘public’.

“So the answer is communication and mutual respect—which go hand-in-hand with progress.

“So politicians can enact legislation which can help police help us.

Because if we can stand in their shoes, they can then stand in ours.
Isn’t It About Time We Stopped Acting Like Fruit Flies.

Abstracted from “A Scientists View of Almost Everything”

by Mark M. Green

When the Scots revolted against the feudal demands of Edward I and mustered an army around the turn of the fourteenth century it lead to a massive English response causing the Scots to lose their richest and most populous city, Berwick. According to “A History of Britain” by Simon Schama, Edward decided to use the people of Berwick to send a message to the Scots to desist from such revolutionary folly in the future. “Over three days an immense massacre – at least eleven thousand souls, including countless women and children – took place.”

The Byzantines and Bulgarians had been at war for decades in a period around three hundred years before the English-Scottish encounter at Berwick when the Byzantine emperor Basil decisively defeated the Bulgarians in 1014. Basil decided that he needed to teach the Bulgarians not to meddle with him again. He took the nearly fifteen thousand prisoners from the battle, divided them into groups of one hundred and blinded ninety nine men in each group, leaving one man in each group with one eye so that he could lead the others home thereby becoming famously known as Basil the Bulgar-Slayer.

It’s not fun to become aware of the ugly side of humanity as these two among the multitude of examples demonstrate, but we can hope that such things took place long ago and now we are an increasingly more civilized people less capable of such atrocities. Aren’t we?

Let’s jump ahead about a half a millennium to the First World War where about twenty million lives were lost, about half of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts. Now, significant areas of these non-combatants, which makes an important contrast to the Second World War, only twenty five years later, a war that ground up life in excess of seventy million human beings by most counts.

Males fight for dominance when presented with limited resources under the headings, food, females and space, while females continuously bicker without a winner. A male fly that loses a fight is unlikely to win another and essentially so against the same competitor – a loser’s mentality. A fight between two unevenly matched male flies will be resolved by threats, such as raising their wings while evenly matched flies will go to the mat using every move available to win the fight. Sound familiar. Well, it might be difficult to accept that the murderous tendencies of our own species arise from the same biological source. But scientific research on fruit flies point in precisely that direction, toward a genetic source of aggression.

Fruit flies range to about 2.5 mm but they really pack a punch. All well and good for fruit flies but isn't about time all of us stopped acting like them.
The Last Straw

By Katie Keith

“Mark it Covid” has become a phrase around our house. I’m not sure exactly what it’s a placeholder for. “Put a Fork in It”, maybe. “So It Goes,” is a possibility (Vonnegut). Or it could be just a thing to yell across the room after weeks on end of spending too much time together and running out of things to say. “Hey, we need more milk.”

“Mark it Covid!”

I don’t exactly know what it means when I say it but I do know why I say it. Of course, it was when my mother told me that we didn’t have an accurate count of COVID deaths because they were just calling all deaths COVID. And this got me thinking about cause of death, which, as it turns out, is a subject I am very interested in.

When my brother died in 2007, I found out very early in the morning. My sister called and said “There was an accident; and then she said he “jumped off a balcony.” So was it an accident or did he jump? We still don’t totally understand but around sunset of that same day, I realized people were going to say he killed himself. Oh no. That would never be the cause of death to me. I know too much context.

When my grandmother died in 1997, prior to her death, she had a very prolonged illness, wherein she was, well, I don’t know what you call it—catatonic? They called it dementia. I remember the dementia part; that was shorter. During that portion, she was salty and confused which was the exact opposite of how she’d been prior to dementia. My grandfather, who visited her everyday and brought her a red rose every Friday, agreed with his children (one of them my mother) that they would get an autopsy when she died so they could determine her real cause of death. Then she died. My Aunt Susan, my mom’s sister, who needed to fly from California to Maryland to attend the funeral tells it like this: I talked to Dad about the autopsy before I boarded the plane, and by the time I got home, she was cremated. Mark it Covid.

In Russia, if you have late stage cancer and then you get COVID they will not mark it COVID even if it was in fact the COVID that pushed you over the edge. Speaking of over the edge, they are also pushing doctors out windows. Now, are those COVID deaths?

My Aunt Susan died recently. She was a lonely person and she drank a lot. Her cause of death was ruled heart attack but wasn’t it really loneliness? Although, in the end, she wasn’t that lonely. She’d recently found a new drinking pal in her interior decorator. So it was the companionship that may have actually done her in. Likely, this was not summarized on her death certificate, although there may have been room. According to an article recently published in Scientific American called “How COVID-19 Deaths Are Counted,” death certificates have space to list an immediate cause of death, as well as the chain of events that led to that final disease or incident. The example they give for a COVID patient is the immediate cause of death would be respiratory failure and the secondary would be “due to COVID-19.”

Then there was my other Aunt Susan, Uncle Dan’s wife. She died alone in the house while Uncle Dan was mowing the lawn. They did not do an autopsy because she was recovering from knee surgery and the presumption was she got a blood clot and died instantly. Since everyone in the family seemed satisfied with this explanation, that became her cause of death, and the medical examiner got the weekend off.

I never really considered the power of medical examiners. If there is room for “chain of events,” then there is room for a tale. If my mom could imagine all the medical examiners as DNC operatives, wouldn’t I imagine them as Nick Carraway? Isn’t Gatsby just a terrific chain of events? Immediate cause of death: Gun shot. Secondary: Hopeless romantic. Or better yet: “No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart.”

What do we know about COVID is that when people with contributing factors like heart disease or high blood pressure get it, it can be a last straw. This is actually the phrase that Dr. Sally Aiken, president of the National Association of Medical Examiners used, which I think is a great phrase. It also strikes me as a phrase that can be highly speculative or highly straightforward depending on the circumstances. What isn’t either of those, is whether or not someone is dead when they are dead. As of yet, this point has not been politicized and therefore muddied.

When my grandmother died, my grandfather likely felt he was next, or hoped it and in thinking ahead to the weight of that inevitability, didn’t really care anymore why my grandmother was dead. Or maybe he was just really sad. He’d seen a lot to be sad about in his life. My grandmother died right after Christmas and I went to help my grandfather straighten up before out of town guests started to arrive. He asked me to store some left over wrapping paper in a back bedroom because, “Christmas will come again, I suppose.” He didn’t seem sure.

He was diagnosed with cancer nine years earlier and everyone gathered at the house to be with him. We thought it was near the end but it was hard to tell. When it was over, we agreed as a family, immediate cause of death: cancer. But his last straw seemed to be when my father, his son-in-law had to help him to the bathroom the morning before. This 86 year old had seen enough, he was not going to have someone hold him up while he peed. So, secondary cause: stubborn and willful. The man that had buried his love nine years earlier, saw his mother drown in a boating accident when he was 10 in 1929, whose father held him up while he peed. So, second cause: stubborn and willful. The man that had buried his love nine years earlier, saw his mother drown in a boating accident when he was 10 in 1929, whose father abandoned him and headed West afterwards, who entered France the day after D day, well, he was done. Mark him Covid.

Katie Keith is a former resident of the West Village that currently resides in Maplewood, NJ. She can be reached at katielynkeith@gmail.com

Ivies continued from page 9

published a statement of principles of freedom of speech, clarifying its “overarching commitment” to free, robust and un inhibited debate and deliberation among all members of the University’s community.” The responsibility of a university is to maintain a climate of civility and mutual respect, but not to prevent discussion of ideas, even if most members of the community find them “disagreeable, offensive, immoral or wrong-headed.”

Many prominent universities have adopted the Chicago principles. Of the eight Ivies, only Princeton has signed on. All the Ivies should state their strong support. Doing so would signify their commitment to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly. Granting freedom of speech to candidates for roles in university governance would be a great place to start. That would give my friend a whole lot better chance of getting elected.

Jesse Robert Lovejoy, a lifelong New Yorker, practiced law at Davis Polk & Wardwell and worked at Lazard and other financial services firms for over 50 years in Manhattan. He now operates a personal consulting practice. He holds a B.A. from Yale and a J.D. cum laude from Columbia.

Don’t Be Stupid

Always wear a mask when you’re around other people.

It helps protect others from the virus particles you spread while talking, coughing or sneezing.

You don’t want to be responsible for causing serious illness, or even death, in others
Report Card:
My One-Year Experience Writing for WestView News About Curing AIDS

By Kambiz Shekdar, Ph.D.

My first column in WestView News appeared a year ago. How has my column added to the general discussion? What has been the response from readers? Have people found it valuable? How much funding did my column help raise for the charitable cause I set out to support? I invite any interested readers to share their thoughts. Here is my own report card.

Each month WestView News’ articles speak to the concerns on the top of readers’ minds. The paper’s regular contributors also offer timely articles in their areas of expertise. The newspaper’s neighborhood of Manhattan’s West Village was the epicenter of the AIDS epidemic where many residents continue to suffer its impact. As a gay man, biotech inventor and AIDS cure researcher, my column aims to share news and hope of a cure for AIDS.

By way of background, my organization was first included in the pages of WestView News during its coverage of the Gay Pride March last year. Shortly after, I asked George Capis, the paper’s publisher, if he might publish my views on a controversial topic relating to HIV/AIDS. This would be a difficult article for me to write and for George to publish because it went against the grain. Nonetheless, WestView published my article in September 2019 after having presented a formal introduction to my organization in August.

How many reader comments did we get? How many letters to the editor? How many donations? What was the total amount of donations? 0, 0, 0 and 0. Given these results, why not throw in the towel?

First, based on my interactions with people who are newly diagnosed as HIV positive, I know that their hope is to not live forever with HIV/AIDS but to get rid of it, the same dream many long-term survivors had before it was beaten out of them. And when anyone googles a cure, they will find some of the hope and information they seek in this column and in the mission of my organization, Research Foundation to Cure AIDS (RFTCA). This includes news of the donation of promising biotechnology in the field of curing AIDS to RFTCA, and the first statements in support of a cure from major U.S. presidential candidates.

Second, in addition to being a newspaper, WestView News is a community organization. Readers reach out to George for help with problems and he responds with solutions. Although I did not ask George for help, that did not stop him from offering it. He wrote to the CEO of Northwell Health about his idea that our efforts to develop a cure should be housed at the former site of the AIDS ward of St. Vincent’s Hospital, which once served as the center for compassionate care of NYC’s AIDS victims and which Northwell now occupies. This has resulted in ongoing discussions which we hope may lead to a physical presence with high symbolic value that could help catalyze further development.

Finally, I believe that one day, somehow, this column will reach those who are motivated and eager to add their part in making a cure a reality for all those in need. This is based on my own personal worldview. I constantly find myself thinking about how I could make the greatest impact for good on this planet. In my case, my most valuable asset is the biotechnology that I had a role in developing and which I have freely given to RFTCA. I believe that there are many others who share the same worldview, and among them are some who may wish to direct their energy and giving toward enabling a cure. All we need is one person who will fund the team and its work, and I believe he or she may come across my message in a bottle one day. If we can reach that one person, I will be in the lab within a week, and I know exactly what to do to take the next major steps.

Kambiz Shekdar, Ph.D. is a biologist, a biotech inventor, co-founder of Chromocell Corporation, a gay man, and president of Research Foundation to Cure AIDS (RFTCA). Contact kambiz.shekdar@rftca.org or follow RFTCA on Instagram @RFTcaids.
Impeach Him Again, Immediately

By Alec Pruchnicki, MD

I've written about how I disagreed with Trump on political grounds, but this piece is why I oppose him on serious medical grounds. After impeachment early this year, Democrats, including myself, were starting to plan for the election in November. When COVID came in, everything changed as life and death decisions had to be made immediately and not in November. Although this disease was new and unusual enough to mislead the medical community initially, medical treatments have improved significantly. Public health policies have also improved, but not in the U.S. very much. Much of this is because of Trump.

Several years before the virus hit, he dismantled the White House team designed to address outbreaks like this, and blamed it on unnamed White House staff. When the virus appeared in the U.S., the first thing he did was to abdicate his position as leader of the country and dump all responsibility for facing this crisis onto the states and their governors who did not have nearly the resources of the federal government. This led to disastrous outcomes, especially in the Northeast states. Besides minimizing concern about the virus, he also minimized a response. The Defense Production Act (DPA) was not fully mobilized, the use of masks and isolation was almost completely ignored until recently, and protective equipment was in short supply and unfairly distributed. He ignored advice of scientists and physicians. He didn't use the "bully pulpit" of the presidency to get the spineless enabling legislation passed. The DPA still hasn't been fully implemented, he still hasn't put pressure on the governors to make needed sacrifices, he is pushing for unsafe school reopenings and campaign rallies, and he seems to minimize scientific input and sometimes directly suppresses it. As deaths increase, waiting until November, or January or (God forbid) four years from January will result in the loss of at least tens of thousands of lives.

Fellow Democrats that I've spoken to are not in favor of another impeachment. First, there might not be enough time for impeachment hearings and investigations. But, when Congress wants to move fast it could, like when it spent trillions of dollars in a few days. Also, detailed investigations are not needed since there is already enough in the public record to provide evidence.

Second, it would be unprecedented to impeach again. But with all the unprecedented things he has repeatedly done, it would be fitting that he got a taste of his own medicine.

Third, this will be a distraction from the election. But it will also be a greater distraction for the Republicans as it will raise the stakes and be an existential threat to his presidency. Since this election could be one of the dirtiest in history, with Russian hacking, Supreme Court approval of voter suppression, and COVID fears, business as usual might not be enough to get a fair result.

Lastly, there will be a backlash with countless whining Tweets about the DEEP STATE, the FAILING NEW YORK TIMES, and QAnon conspiracies. Arguing against this predictable response will be the 200,00 or so dead, many of them in deep red Republican states.

Sometimes, in medicine, time is of the essence and you have to act quickly even when it is difficult. It should be the same in this case, unless we are willing to let his ongoing incompetence continue to kill people who could have been saved. Impeach him again, immediately.

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Scenes From The Performance

By Bennett Kremen

When a raven-haired, high-minded beauty like Anyaskaya d’borovik, the renowned doyenne of a spirited Greenwich Village dance troop, succumbs in passion to a rugged, willful man like “Sonny Boy” Aiello, the question always asked is, “Why?”

Anya, a sophisticated, fiercely dedicated artist, flourishing in radiance throughout my novel, The Performance, keeps pushing herself beyond the perpetually challenging boundaries of modern dance and of life itself—hungering for the mysteries and ecstasies of universal consciousness cherished by the mystical traditions of her hithborn White Russian heritage, and compelled by the stormy, creative yearnings haunting the very soul of the Village. Yet we find her in the embrace of a torrid, dangerous love with an ominous man raised on the brutal backstreets of Brooklyn’s waterfront.

Cunning and violent—yet with a strange but genuine sense of honor—Sonny Boy smashes his way to infamous power in Little Italy and, yes, the Village, where the mob, though unseen, plays a significant role in its elegant, tree-lined streets and beloved red brick townhouses. It was these willful men who, indeed, were the ones who broke the law, significantly, by allowing gay men to live freely in an after-hours club called the “Stonewall.” And wherever Salvatore Aiello goes in Bensonhurst or on Mulberry Street, people admirably and eagerly call out, “Hey, Sonny Boy, hey, hey ya doin’?”

Anya first encountered Sonny Boy in the Villa da Vinci, the exquisite gourmet restaurant he owns. While at a table bright with flowers and fine silver, she was being cruelly harassed by a spurned lover of immense wealth and power. And when her anguish and despair start increasing, Sonny—eyes burning—steps forward; and even the man of wealth and power can only stop dead-cold without another word. For many frightful weeks thereafter, although Anya tries desperately to resist Sonny’s ardent desire, she fails utterly—while the man she’d turned down, Henri Mellington, a vengeful member of an international banking family with vast political connections, keeps stewing in his bitterness.

Ultimately, with the aid of an influential senator, Mellington has a deadly government surveillance put on Sonny’s every move while, in a fury, cutting off all his financial support so frantically needed by Anya to mount the most important dance performance of her life—one of shattering artistic and spiritual meaning, attracting great interest from the press and well-known critics. Anya struggles through this, nonetheless, and despite extreme emotional stress manages to scrounge up the funds she so badly must have. And at last, exciting rehearsals with great promise and striking, dedicated dancers joyfully commence, launching the so longed-for glorious performance, which traps Mellington in his rage only more deeply.

Sonny and Anya then embark on an erotic, adventurous affair with daring sailing trips through storms to Block Island, exquisite, sparkling dinners at the Villa da Vinci and nostalgic vodka-charged moments at Russian nightclubs in Brighton Beach. And then the affair turns breathlessly into true love, despite the relentless government surveillance pressing in on them more ominously each day. And in this rising danger, the meaning of love, honor, friendship, violence, artistic passion and moral behavior is felt ever more keenly. Stirred, finally, by these revelations and her high principles, Anya—exerting the profound power of her personality—can’t help prevailing upon Sonny Boy to begin changing his ways. And that, ultimately, in the deepest of ironies, brings down true tragedy.
You’ve kept us fed through late nights and long shifts. You’ve donated masks and gloves that keep us and our patients safe. Your messages of hope push us forward, no matter what comes our way.

And Lenox Health Greenwich Village is here to support you, too. We’ve put smart safety precautions in place across our facilities and emergency department, so you and your family can continue getting the care you need, when you need it.

It’s just as important as ever to stay healthy, because there’s so much ahead to cheer for—together.

Northwell.edu/SupportingTheVillage
The Day the Village Stood Still:
The Moratorium and Booty Loot in the PPP

By Roger Paradiso

Not long ago, the New York Daily News reported that Governor Cuomo had extended the statewide moratorium on evictions through the end of August, and promised that New Yorkers won’t get booted from their homes or businesses for being unable to pay rent during the coronavirus pandemic.

The moratorium, which was set to expire June 20th, will now remain in effect until August 20th.

Politicians love to kick the can down the road. I remember as a kid we used to play kick the can as we were walking home from school. It’s a lost art, except for politicians who love to kick the “figurative” can down the road.

Jimm Drougas, owner of Unoppressive Non-Imperialist Bargain Books on Carmine Street, sent me an email: “While Cuomo and De Blasio contend for who is in charge of this or that, there needs to be deep regard for our survival in the immediate future.”

Jim went into the store for several days during the “opening.” He decided to stay closed. There were no tourists, who used to come to the store because it has an awesome collection of out of print books ranging from Robert Blake to Bob Dylan. And his regulars were hesitant to come in the Covid world. He told me the majority of people coming into the store were without masks. He would tell them they had to wear them, but they didn’t want to hear that. So, Jim closed the store for now. Not worth the health risks in this climate.

What is it with the masks? Somebody told me not wearing them was considered a gesture against tyranny. I wear a mask. Wouldn’t leave home without it. And I don’t feel like it’s a symbol of anything but trying to stop the spread of this pandemic in the way the CDC doctors advise.

The moratorium is just around the corner. It’s almost August 20th. The story about this moratorium is survival. It is the executioner’s song. On that day in August, evictions can begin. I don’t know any small businessperson or residential tenant who has sufficient cash in reserve to pay back-rent which could be for four or five months. Do you know anyone with 50-100k in their pockets?

I pass by Jamal’s place on my walking tour of the shop owners I’ve been in touch with during the last five months. Jamal says he does not have a big reserve, so paying back-rent will be a deal breaker for him and his Village Music Store on Bleecker Street.

“All of us know it’s a real issue and it’s too overwhelming for individuals and businesses,” said Jamal. “It’s just very hard for small businesses to deal with such a real disaster like this COVID-19, and the riots, looting etc. I’ve worked in my neighborhood for 32 years and I lived through changes… In my own opinion, we must save small businesses.” Jamal comes into his store every day. There are few customers.

It feels like a war zone. Like we’ve been invaded by hostile forces who bomb out our infrastructure. Only this is an “invisible” invader, a virus, and instead of destroying our infrastructure, this invader has bombarded our stores and city. Business is crumbling, but not buildings yet.

Do we have a national plan which will reconstruct our failing economy? No, we have a White House which cannot get a grip on the facts about this virus even though the death count will have exceeded 150,000 by the time you read this story. The enemy has invaded the southern and western states. Yes, those states are going through what New York went through last March and April. Without a national plan we are spinning our wheels.

As I walk through the ravaged Village, with store fronts boarded up and makeshift street cafes popping up all over the area, I wonder what the plan is. Does anybody know? Are we to keep kicking the can down the road, with these PPP plans and SBA loans that only offer a band-aid to a massive wound?

I heard this news report the other day: corruption in the PPP; millions and millions of dollars went to the wrong companies—who didn’t need all that money. It didn’t go to the mom-and-pop shops that needed every bit of that money.

The New York Times wrote that 20 of the largest hospitals received $5 billion in Care’s Act funds while smaller community hospitals struggle to stay open. Do the wealthy inherit the earth and the booty loot Benjamins of the Care’s Act?

I get a text from Nick the Greek. Nick loves movie theaters and he owns three of them. The one in the Village is a gem. It’s the oldest continuously running “art” theater in Manhattan, and it is in trouble. But Nick vows he will never let it fall. I read Nick’s text as I walk the abandoned streets of Greenwich Village. “No doubt, closing movie theaters for several months was the right thing to do. Small mom-and-pop businesses can think outside of the box and can re-open safely for our patrons within government guidelines. Every week we remain closed going forward, we are facing a permanent shut down.

It’s starting to rain, and I pop into one of my favorite places, the Half Pint (where I filmed Searching for Camelot), which is searching for a home in this pandemic without movie theaters. I ask to speak to Tory. I am told she is not in today. I place a take-out order for my son Anthony who is in the car helping me out. I also order a beer for George Capsis, the publisher of this paper. I’m heading over to his house to discuss my article. As I look around the Half Pint, I see they have been regulated to remove all tables and chairs. It looks like a home that has lost its owners, but Tory and her partners are hanging in, trying to figure out what is going on, as she said to me in a text:

“It’s like being on a racetrack with a speed limit, Cops everywhere issuing tickets, Zombies chasing you, And you have a car with three wheels, While you still pay full price……….”

I drop a donation into the tip cup and leave, taking another look at the misty Half Pint at the corner of Thompson and West 3rd Streets as I walk through the rain.

“The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)…has been a direct target of potential fraud to the tune of $126 million,” claimed Calvin Shivers, of the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division, testifying to the Senate Judiciary Committee. “In my 26 years on this committee, I’ve never seen anything quite like this,” Senator Feinstein said. “…Consumers have lost nearly $488 million due to coronavirus-related fraud as of June 7th, including scams for test kits, virus cures and treatments, price gouging, hoarding and unemployment fraud. I wonder if it’s worth continuing,” Feinstein said. “How do you stop this fraud?” (newsweek.com)

As Anthony drives me to George’s office on Charles Street I hear this sad news on CBS radio: “The U.S. has surpassed four million cases with over 145,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University.

I look over my USA news popping up on my cell phone: “The U.S. insurance industry has been largely denying claims for losses caused by coronavirus-driven lockdowns from businesses-interruption policies, saying that pandemics are excluded.”

“We believe the industry does have wherewithal to take risk here,” said Maurice Greenberg. He said Chubb (the biggest insurance company) is talking to lawmakers, brokers, and other insurers about its plan.

Now that a plan that could work. Stop kicking the can Mr. President, Governor Cuomo, and Mayor de Blasio.

I look at the black rain-slicked street called Bleecker, and the resilient people opening up and the brave customers. We know there are no cans to kick anymore. So, what about the Chubb plan? I want a moratorium on everything except the Chubb plan. Stop kicking the cans that aren’t there anymore.

If this paper makes you think:

We will print your thoughts in the next issue

Send your letter to gcapsis@gmail.com

69 Charles St.
New York NY 10014

www.westviewnews.org
Lunch Will Have To Wait

By Russell Sara

“His mask is bigger than his Speedo.”

“Look straight ahead, honey.” I gripped Steve’s hand with my wedding ring in full view. Onward we marched along the six-foot-wide wooden boardwalk, our masks up, holding a chilled bottle of Guilhem 2018, our house rosé that we consumed in copious amounts like Kool-Aid at childhood picnics. Exercising our new “social contract” with friends seemed to be working in Fire Island Pines. No more than four, occasionally adding a fifth (when sympathizing that COVID made it difficult to find a husband), meet outdoors and sit spaced apart. Low cal Skinny Pop Popcorn served in mini ramekins to avoid shared hand dipping. After two weeks passed, we introduced pre-plated lunch and dinners outdoors. The fresh salt air, cool breeze, and laughing together felt wonderful.

Everyone on Facebook had been complaining of weight gain while isolating, returning to fattening comfort food and blaming it all on closed gyms. The scenery in The Pines told a different story. Beautiful, sculpted men peppered the stunning sandbar’s landscape. Apparently, everyone under 40 had been surviving on a one-a-day Tic Tac while working with virtual trainers. “It’s their age,” Steve said. Thank god I had a supply of oversized tank tops. Why wasn’t I born with their genes?

An unexpected gaggle of youth tromped into the socially-distancing cocktail party of six. They hugged and kissed the hosts. We backed away. “Don’t worry, we all have antibodies.” The twelve of them had been partying the night away. Messages and hash tags this time read: “Fuck coronavirus.” Why? Gays are better than us? My head kept doing the math. The how many people had they been in contact with? My head kept doing the math. The how many people had they been in contact with? My head kept doing the math. The how many people had they been in contact with? My head kept doing the math. The how many people had they been in contact with?

Two weeks passed, our social contract still in good working order, we anticipated a quiet 4th of July. The historic 45th “Invasion of the Pines” where thousands gathered to watch our sister community Cherry Grove’s 300 plus drag queens arriving in the harbor had been cancelled. The hickory and smoked ribs slowly roasting filled the air. Steve had expanded and set the outdoor table for our three guests and admired his arrangement of fresh cut hydrangeas. We walked on the beach before our guests arrived. The inner tube surrounding my stomach prevented me from strolling topless like I did in my 30s. Dumbfounded, many looked like they had dunked their face in flour with poorly applied sunblock, I asked myself, “how difficult is it to blend?”

After a dip in the pool, our guests freshened up with their own towels. We blew air kisses. You knew it was a good lunch when it ended by 4 pm. While Steve clean up, I checked my messages. I felt like a rock had been thrown through our window. A picture of 300 plus brats frolicking on the beach, music blaring, an open bar and there was no air separating their kisses. I forwarded it to our board President. The phone started ringing. Other board members and concerned residents started chiming in. The police were called over and over. But they made no serious attempt to disperse the swelling crowd. Messages appeared: “OMG, COVID spreaders, Not welcome. Kick them out.”

Our safe haven felt distinctly unsafe. Gate locked, we ate by ourselves that night, cuddled and lost ourselves in the new Perry Mason on HBO. I tossed and turned. The marathon all-day rosé had me getting up on the hour. Steve brought some fresh brewed coffee to the outer deck. We wiped the dew soaked Sunbrella fabric. The robins chirping away fled as the annoying giant black crows descended. I kept picking at a chipped nail and wondered where I had misplaced my file – my “go to” tool to relieve anxiety instead of biting them. I checked my text messages before my now predictable NY Times depressing Covid update. The rock that had been thrown through the window now felt more like a Molotov cocktail. Instagram lit up with a picture of hundreds of shirtless guys who had been partying the night away. Messages and hash tags this time read: “Fuck your mask, fuck your social distancing, fuck your vaccine...#freelandpines, #beachlife, #coronavirus.” Why? Gays are better than this. We aren’t those straight irresponsible Covid-idiots in Florida and Texas. My coffee started repeating. The Pines reputation burst into flames. Within hours every major news and social media platform seized on the misbehaving as their lead story. Video of the beach party revealed a self-proclaimed rebel spewing, “I have Covid. I don't give a shit. I hope I spread it.” NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN, SKY and the BBC repeated his proclamation and these distressing images over and over. We wanted to crawl in to a hole. Friends and family near and far checked in. “Are you safe? What the hell is going on?”

Gates locked. The island seemed much quieter. Nervous chatter could be heard in 77 Christopher Street
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Hudson River Café Pier 45 Expands Private Spaces

By Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

Years of debate went into how our westside riverfront should be designed. Many of our readers will recall when the Hudson River Park (HRP) opened 20 years ago, or even 12 years ago, when the public esplanade had a string of sturdy masonry comfort stations plus an elegant little concession building, all carefully matching in materials and design. The seasonal concession stand, seasonally serving waffles and other snacks, had a few picnic benches where members of the public could relax and linger. That atmosphere in our beautifully designed park has now changed drastically.

When Pier 55 aka Barry Diller’s “Little Island” was approved for construction in 2018, the private-public partnership was given a sweetheart deal to consume a very sizable chunk of the park at 12th Street, with carte blanche programming set by the private developer, not the public.

Now the concession area at Pier 45, just north of Christopher Street, is going in the same direction. A large bar was added for serving alcohol on the north side, then a masonry pizza oven was built at the back with a long, tall vent stack added. Wooden barricades are placed to reserve a huge area on both sides of the building for paying customers only.

This year, during the pandemic shutdown, we noticed what at first seemed boarding up of the windows to avoid vandalism. But then more work continued, almost doubling the building size, incorporating an addition that reaches back to the bike path to the east. New serving bars are built on both the north and the south sides, with more esplanade off-limits to the public, according to Bill Rettig, Senior Director of Facilities for HRP Trust.

A simple white wooden box now covers the lovely brick, stone, and clerestory glass compositions, losing any relationship to the adjacent buildings. Gone are the picnic tables, the pizza, the waffles. Don't plan on drifting in to the café area to relax if you are not a paying customer. You may find Drift In on the internet to pre-order or see the high-end menu before you go.

Yesterday I interviewed my friend Ramsey Clark, 92, about his lifelong relationship with his great friend John Lewis. Ramsey Clark was Attorney General during The Great Society and wrote and supervised both the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1968. He said of his beloved friend Lewis, with whom he traveled to the South for Civil Rights in 1965 and attended the protest at the Edmund Pettis bridge in Selma on Bloody Sunday (he also helped to protect the “negroes”—as they were called—at the March on Washington in 1963):

"He was one of the great joys of my life. He gave everything and asked for nothing in return."

—Bruce Poli

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Lunch continued from page 15

the outdoor grocery lineup among those waiting six feet apart and wearing masks – despair, embarrassment and anger in everyone's eyes. Our collective twelve weeks of isolation in the city and four weeks of re-entering the world in our beloved home had been blown away. Were we that naive? Surely our own would be better? Had the AIDS epidemic not taught us anything? My generation barely survived it. Theirs seemed to have forgotten it. They may look good in a Speedo with an oversized mask, but ignorance and selfishness couldn't be concealed.

I started boiling the pearl barley for my Egyptian Barley Salad with Pomegranate for our planned vegetarian meal with new friends. A sure lunch favorite. I had worked hard to score hazelnuts for my Carrot and Fennel salad. The hydrangeas Steve had cut held up well through the week. We longed for a sense of normalcy reclaiming our "social contract" with an outdoor distancing rendezvous. Bing. A text message, "Sorry guys. Last weekend's events rattled us. We don't feel comfortable..." I replied. "We know how you feel. The barley will keep. Lunch will have to wait."

LUNCH continued from page 15
“Hello, is this the newspaper?”

Was a phone question I received from the owner of a small grocery store off Greenwich who wanted copies of WestView to sell to his customers—in fact it was the customers who pleaded with him to stock them!

Dusty took a pile over and they now sit next to the New York Times. That was a few days ago and maybe he needs to be restocked—how nice. As you know, with the pandemic the library has been closed so we have not been giving away the more than 500 copies a month that in that reading retreat so evidently our “regulars” miss the paper (you have no idea how good that makes me feel).

The very grateful grocery store owner asked Dusty “How much should I charge and what do I pay you and Dusty with her usual instant largess offered “nothing—you keep all the money”.

Yes, well, so now we come to the subject of this sermon—Dusty is wrong... we need the money.

Dusty also says “don’t tell people you need money—they won’t give you money if you need it.”

Dusty gave me a year’s subscription to the EPOCH TIMES for $150, a very slick weekly newspaper a little larger than the Times but printed on better hard white paper and it even has comics! The paper is financed by a Chinese billionaire who hates the present Chinese regime and does not miss an issue without an attack, but in the last issue, they made a full page plea to subscribers (evidently they need money).

“Why should I subscribe to your paper when I get it free in my lobby” is a painful phrase that has its origin in the fact that the “free” paper started as the Charles Street Block Association four page 8 1/2” by 11” photocopied newsletter paid for by yearly block association dues. If the pandemic turns off more ads you may no longer find it “free in the lobby.”

No, no, if you want the paper to stay alive and even get better you should subscribe for $12 for six months and $24 for a year or if you have more money than you can spend, make a tax-deductible gift.

❑ I like the paper but I am too lazy to pay online
❑ OK, I will take a six month subscription for $12.
❑ I will take a one year subscription for $24.
❑ I would like to make a $_________ donation.
❑ Here are my comments and suggestions for making it a better paper

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WestView News
and the Strathmere Ensemble
invite you to join us for

Waltzing Around
the Village!

A live streaming broadcast from the garden of St. John’s in the Village, brought to you by MUSAE
Friday August 28th, 7:30 pm

Music of
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Performed by the Strathmere Ensemble
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Louise Schulman, viola
Daire FitzGerald, cello
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In addition to more re-openings this month, there were also a number of actual openings, something we’ve not seen much of since early this year. And we noticed some signs of additional openings to come. Sadly, as expected, a number of places have decided to close permanently as a result of the challenges they’ve faced in the past few months.

Open

Caffè Aronne
112 Greenwich Avenue near Jane Street

This cheerful cafe serving delicious expresso so drinks (including shakenato!) made with La Pavoni opened the week of March 7th, but shut down a week later. In early June they re-opened, and have had an enthusiastic following ever since. The owner, Aaron Dahan, is a recent college grad who started a coffee cart catering company while he was still in school. Aaron purchases the coffee directly from farmers in South America and then roasts it at a roasting facility in the Hudson Valley. In addition to the coffee, pastries from local bakeries are available, and a selection of sandwiches made in house have also become popular. You and your furry friend can both enjoy gelato (the dog gelato sold out briefly but is now back in stock), and outside of the shop is a compost bin for neighbors to bring their compost. (The department of sanitation stopped its compost program in May, and compost is no longer being collected at most sites around the city; so this is a wonderful option for those of us who are still composting.) There is a jolly outdoor terrace, complete with Italian flags. Moreover, you can feel good about having your coffee here. According to their website: “We extend this sense of coffee and community to the greater New York City area, donating 5% of all sales to various charities throughout the city. We can’t force other restaurants to do the right thing, but we can lead by example. In that small way, we hope to inspire others to do the same.”

Also Open

Silver Apricot
(20 Cornelia Street between West 4th and Bleecker Streets) has opened in the space that used to house Home. Simone Tong was the force behind the now-closed but very popular Little Tong Noodle Shop in the East Village but at this restaurant she focuses on her concept of Chinese-American food which is quite elevated. There is a 3 course tasting menu and an a la carte menu available for takeout, delivery, or outdoor dining, and you can end your meal with a boozy snowcone. Sushi Teru (615 1/2 Hudson Street, between Jane and West 12th Streets) is a new sushi/omakase spot that has taken over the space that was Bespoke Kitchen, and before that, Sung Chu Mei. Chef Kou spent over a decade working at two Michelin-starred sushi restaurants, and here he serves Edomae-style sushi which, according to the website, “involves using the aging process to preserve the fish, develop umami flavors and create a more tender texture.” The take-out and delivery menu features à la carte sushi, while the outdoor dining menu has three multi-course omakase options ranging in price from $60 to $200. Wicked Jane (15 West 8th Street between 5th Avenue and MacDougal Street) is offering fine dining outdoors (but no take-out or delivery) where Moroccan restaurant Mekki NYC was until October. According to the menu, the restaurant features “modern cuisine inspired by love, emotion, music and essence.” The chef, Zod Ariefa, hails from New Jersey where he had three well-regarded restaurants. The patio is one of the most elegant ones around, with blue velvet chairs and a black and white patterned floor. In addition, on weekends, the stretch of 8th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues is closed to traffic making it a fun place to go. Just in time for the hot weather, Gelateria Gentile – West Village (41 8th Avenue between Jane and West 4th Streets) has opened next door to Aux Merveilleux de Fred making a very sweet block. The owners are Southern Italian and the family has been making gelato there since 1880. Their first US shop was in Williamsburg and is very popular. Village Square Pizza (118 Christopher Street between Bleecker and Bedford Streets) has opened a West Village location in a Cronman building, in the storefront that used to be Karahi Indian Cuisine. The opening was scheduled for March but was delayed due to the pandemic. They have had a location in the East Village since 2018, and are known for their Vodka Squares, Pepperoni Squares, and Grandma Pizzas.

Re-opened

Bagels on the Square
(7 Carmine Street at 6th Avenue) had closed for renovations before the pandemic, and many feared it would not return, but finally it did. While Taim has been open and serving falafel throughout the pandemic, Balaboosta (611 Hudson Street at West 12th Street), Einat Admony’s other West Village restaurant has been closed. Now they are once again serving their modern Israeli food for take-out, delivery, and outdoor dining, and they have added a “pastry” section to their menu with a number of Middle Eastern sauces and staples. Tea & Sympathy (108 Greenwich Avenue near Jane Street) is now open 7 days a week for take-out and delivery, and Friday, Saturday and Sunday for outdoor dining on their patio, festooned with Union Jacks. The afternoon I walked by, many were availing themselves of the elaborate tea service. On their website you can find links to two GoFundMe pages, one for the restaurant and one for the staff. La Bonbonnière (28 8th Avenue between Jane and West 12th Streets) is open for outdoor dining, and has somehow made its outdoor space look exactly like the indoor of a greezy spoon. They also have a GoFundMe page available. Michelin-starred Austrian restaurant Wallis (344 West 11th Street at Washington Street) has re-opened and recently celebrated its 20th anniversary.

Closed/Closing

Auction site A.J. Willner listed an upcoming auction for restaurant equipment and a collection of restaurant equipment and a collection of literary author portraits from Chumley’s (86 Bedford Street at Barrow Street), about which they wrote, “This fabled West Village, NY location is closed for good and everything must be sold regardless of price.” However, days after this was posted the webpage was updated with the following text: “At the request of our client, Wednesday’s auction has been canceled. We apologize for any inconvenience.” Stay tuned for more on this developing story. Aria (117 Perry Street between Hudson and Greenwich Streets) appears to be closed. The restaurant has been partially cleared out, and an eagle-eyed contributor noticed a sign on the window from William Gottlieb Management Co. dated July 13th detailing that $93,927.03 in back rent be paid within 14 days. Sweet Corner Bakeshop (535 Hudson Street at Charles Street) is gone. A sign in the window says “After 7 years we are closed. We will miss you.” Bombalulu’s (101 West 10th Street between 6th and Greenwich Avenues) has a sign in the window announcing their upcoming closure after 24 years. Their silk-screened children’s clothing are still available on Etsy. The Starbucks location at 193 Greenwich Avenue (12th Street) has a paper in the window saying that they are temporarily closed, but their signage has been removed, perhaps an indication that they are not coming back. Longtime Village Mexican restaurant Pancho’s (105 MacDougal Street between Bleecker Street and Minetta Lane) is empty, and a “For Rent” sign hangs in the window. The Bandy Rooster (24 Greenwich Avenue near West 10th Street) plans to close at the end of August after being open less than a year. It is one of the few Southwestern restaurants in the city, and was a favorite of our fashion editor. Dominic Ansel has closed his bakery Dominique Ansel Kitchen (137 7th Avenue South between Charles and West 10th Streets), and plans to re-open in a larger venue in the Madison Square Park area. Rossopomodoro Cucina Napoletana (118 Greenwich Avenue at West 13th Street) stopped serving their thin-crust pizzas at the end of July after 5 years at that location. Their restaurants in the Flatiron and PIDL Eataly stores are still open.

Coming Soon

A sign in the window at 361 6th Avenue (at Washington Place), where Seabird used to be, announces the arrival of Planted. While no information is available, one can imagine this will feature plant-based offerings. Construction continues at Amano Café (172 West 4th Street at Jones Street). Crop Circle, a Chinese restaurant, is applying for a liquor license at 126 MacDougal Street (between Minetta Lane and West 3rd Street). Besides dumplings and rice noodle rolls, it will serve guokui, which are like scallion pancakes on steroids. Hancock Street (257 6th Avenue, between Bedford and Downing Streets) will be taking over the space vacated by El Toro Blanco. The new American bistro is expected to open in the fall, but the owners may wait until indoor dining is permitted again.

continued on page 19
In and Out continued from page 18

Pop-ups/Other

Ed Szymanski and Patricia Howard met while working at the Beatrice Inn where Ed was the chef, and in March, they opened Dame, a pop-up in the East Village which served modern British food. Their plan was to open a similar restaurant in the West Village, but when the pandemic arrived they instead opened Dame Summer Club (85 MacDougal Street near Bleecker Street), a take-out counter serving more traditional British offerings, i.e. Fish & Chips, Pimm’s Cups and Eton Mess. Given the chef’s pedigree, these have a more haute cuisine approach than your typical “chippy”. On Sundays, the pop-up has been hosting a guest chef series. In keeping with their kitschy theme, the inviting outdoor patio is carpeted in astroturf and festooned with plastic flowers. The menu and the interior list the states that all profits are donated to charity. 

In keeping with their kitschy theme, the inviting outdoor patio is carpeted in astroturf and festooned with plastic flowers. The menu lists the states that all profits are donated to charity. As the New York Times reported, these have a more haute cuisine approach than your typical “chippy”. On Sundays, the pop-up has been hosting a guest chef series. In keeping with their kitschy theme, the inviting outdoor patio is carpeted in astroturf and festooned with plastic flowers. The menu lists the states that all profits are donated to charity. For many years ran the popular deli Fee Roasters, one of the sons of Jessie who was the early riser, is pleased that Jessie’s is open from 6 AM – 5 PM every day. This deli is run by Sammy, one of the sons of Jessie who for many years ran the popular deli Jessie’s at 7th Avenue between West 12th and West 13th Streets. (Jessie’s left when the space was rented to Duane Reade; that location closed earlier this year.) Julius’ Bar (159 West 10th Street at Waverly Place) has started a GoFundMe campaign to help save the historic space. In 2016 they received a Village Preservation award for protecting the historic space. In 2016 they received a Village Preservation campaign to help save the historic space. In 2016 they received a Village Preservation campaign to help save the historic space. In 2016 they received a Village Preservation campaign to help save the historic space. In 2016 they received a Village Preservation campaign to help save the historic space.

We love to hear from you, and you’ve been a great help! So much is happening it’s hard to keep up, so we really welcome your input. Please email us at wvnewsout@gmail.com with any observations you’ve made.

RESPONDING TO CORONAVIRUS

As we continue to monitor the situation with Coronavirus (COVID-19), we are taking steps to protect the health and well-being of our customers. While the store itself will be closed to the public, you are welcome to shop through our online shop. But please bear with us as we will have a skeleton crew.

We are grateful to have such wonderful customers that are willing to support a local small business like ours.

STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE!
Sarah Jessica Parker Asked

By Brian J. Pape

In and Out, by Caroline Benveniste (West-View News, July 2020), reported the flurry of re-openings of restaurants with outdoor seating that were able to take advantage of the city’s “open restaurant plan” for more than 8,600 businesses. Gene’s “Est. 1919” Restaurant at 73 West 11th Street has been closed for months, not able to benefit from the plan, because restaurants aren’t allowed to block CitiBike docks, fire hydrants, bike lanes, or bus lanes, even though a French restaurant in Midtown is serving customers in the middle of a CitiBike station, and one on MacDougal Street put a seat box right in the bike lane!

Red tape can stranggle the best of intentions. David Ramirez, whose father bought Gene’s in 1979, said removing or relocating just eight bicycle docks would help save the three families that the established restaurant supports.

Our friend and neighbor Sarah Jessica Parker posted her support of Ramirez and Gene’s on her social media account, asking that the Citi Bike station at Gene’s, one of her favorite restaurants, be relocated so they could open with seating at the curbside space. Some criticized her, many supported her.

Citi Bike posted a response: “When cars come off the streets, the possibilities for restaurants, bikes and pedestrians to co-exist—and thrive—are endless.”

Both Ramirez and ABC7NY appealed to the mayor’s office, city council, DOT, and Lyft/CitiBike that the bike docks in front of Gene’s be moved but got nowhere.

Ms. Parker is absolutely right to ask for this; CitiBike can easily move the docks, since there are no fire hydrants or obstacles to move them. Ms. Parker is absolutely right to ask for this; CitiBike can easily move the docks, since there are no fire hydrants or obstacles to move them.

The seriousness of the situation soon became apparent and towards the end of March the city was on lockdown. Except for some essential venues and businesses.

When it appeared that we had a certain control over the Corona Virus, some venues were able to open, albeit some with restrictions, and life seemed to be in the path of becoming normal again. Unfortunately for some states, the situation worsened, and they are backtracking. In many states it is caused by the refusal of some people to wear masks and, in some cases, to keep social distancing.

If the President had followed the recommendations of the medical experts to wear a mask and encourage others by his example to wear a mask and follow all other pertinent rules, we would have been in a better situation. It was truly embarrassing to watch the President’s interview with Chris Wallace. If you have not seen it, you can watch it on YouTube.

The virus was not the only serious situation that plagued our summer: The death of Mr. Floyd gave rise to protests, sometimes violent, but also justified, with demands for changes to police force conduct.

Mr. Trump, by his example of brashness, exaggerations, lies, and lack of civility, has encouraged conduct that probably existed already to some degree, but is now even more prevalent.

Sauteed Shrimp with Tequila

I like this dish because of its complex but well blended flavors. It is also relatively easy and quick to make once the ingredients are assembled. Mint, called in Spanish hierbas buenas is often used in Mexican cuisine, a remnant from the flavors of Spain. Cilantro is more common now, and if you prefer it you can certainly replace it with cilantro.

INGREDIENTS
1 medium green bell pepper, cored and seeded, cut into thin strips
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons of mint leaves (or one tablespoon of mint and 1 tablespoon of parsley leaves for a milder taste)
Salt and ground black pepper to taste
2 ripe avocadoes, peeled and cut into wedges
1 medium red onion cut in half lengthwise and then cut into thin half-moons

DIRECTIONS
In a pan large enough to contain the shrimp in one layer, or use two pans, heat the olive oil over medium heat, and add the sliced onion. Cook stirring until the onion becomes soft and translucent, about six minutes. Add the bell pepper, the minced jalapeno and the garlic, and continue cooking and stirring until the bell pepper strips soften somewhat and are heated through, about three to four additional minutes. Salt and pepper the mixture.

Add the shrimp and cook, turning them once, until they become opaque and turn pink, about three minutes. Lower the heat and add the tequila. At this point, if you wish, after placing the tequila bottle at a safe distance, using a match, or tilting the pan slightly, if cooking on a gas stove, ignite the tequila, but it is not necessary. Shake the pan, away from the heat, until the flames die down. You may also choose to simply boil down the alcohol for one minute.

Stir in the chopped mint, or the mixture of mint and parsley, and the lime juice. Keep warm.

Arrange four avocado wedges, fan-like, on each of four plates.

Place four or five shrimp, accordingly, in the center of each plate and cover with some of the vegetable mixture and the juices. If used, place a tablespoon of Pico de Gallo next to the avocado wedges on each plate. Serve with the tortillas or rice.

4 servings
Note: for the Pico de Gallo in this recipe, replace the cilantro with chopped parsley.

A View From the Kitchen

By Isa Covo

2020 should have been a great year. We talk of 20/20 vision, well this year it was certainly lacking. The government was aware of COVID’s existence since late 2019 but did not consider it as contagious as it turned out to be. Even the medical establishment did not realize the danger to the general public, they thought that only those dealing directly with the patients, the doctors, nurses, hospital and other health care workers were at risk, and since PPE, including masks were in short supply, they asked the public to refrain from buying them.

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INGREDIENTS
1 medium red onion cut in half lengthwise and then cut into thin half-moons
1 medium green bell pepper, cored and seeded, cut into thin strips
1 small jalapeno pepper, cored and seeded, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons of mint leaves (or one tablespoon of mint and 1 tablespoon of parsley leaves for a milder taste)
Salt and ground black pepper to taste
2 ripe avocadoes, peeled and cut into wedges
Pico de Gallo (optional)
Warmed flour or corn tortillas and/or Warmed flour or corn tortillas and/or

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4 servings
Note: for the Pico de Gallo in this recipe, replace the cilantro with chopped parsley.
Growing up in Greenwich Village, I remember the independent stores of Bleecker Street, the 24-hour bodegas, the numerous Chinese restaurants, and the seemingly endless variety of people and high level of energy on the streets. Today, after COVID-19 has sickened, killed, and economically ruined many people of our community and our city, Greenwich Village is a distorted version of what it was like growing up here in the 80’s and 90’s. The sidewalks are empty of tourists and out-of-towners. It’s eerie—but also somehow strangely invigorating—to know that virtually everybody that you walk past is your neighbor. It’s nice that the traffic easily flows north and south and the air is cleaner than it used to be because of the pandemic, but our local businesses have suffered. We are starting to finally find ourselves in the city roots: I went to PS 41 and Lab School, our graphic designer went to PS 3 and Hunter High School, and our canner went to Snysvant High School. The three of us met at Camp Kinderland as kids, and serendipitously came together again for this project after many years of being out of touch. Amanda is from the Bronx originally and likes to boast about having lived in four out of five boroughs.

Despite the full lockdown in New York City, our canner in Saratoga Springs went into production, deemed as essential workers. Today we have thousands of cans ready to go! We have our accounting and distribution teams in place, no easy feat, distributing alcohol in America. Our initial marketing and online marketing and sales plan, however, relied on restaurants and other outlets that knew Amanda and were well aware of the quality of her work. Unfortunately, those establishments were no longer open for business. We pivoted to primarily online marketing and sales. No longer is it possible to have tastings, events or any traditional means of promoting a new beverage. It’s been difficult, if not impossible, to sample Siponey to our customers.

Launching a new product in the epicenter of a global pandemic while, incidentally, raising a newborn when childcare is virtually nonexistent and while nationwide protests rightfully take center stage— all of that is truly a much larger challenge than this local boy ever expected to face. I know we will bounce back both as a community and a city. I hope that our wonderful way of life comes roaring back and that our local businesses can adapt and thrive in this new world. As for Siponey, both myself and Amanda hope that you’ll give us a try.

I look forward to seeing you on a stoop sipping on a Siponey soon!

Richaud is an actor and producer who became a baker during the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. His delicious baguettes are now being baked in increasing numbers in the West Village. Recently featured in Good Morning America and in Forbes magazine, the word is getting out that there is an authentic and native French baker living and working here in the West Village. He’s looking for a mutually beneficial situation with a local restaurant or other establishment that has large or multiple ovens so he can keep up with the growing demand for his amazing loaves. They are made from organic flour and come in several varieties.

Richaud is presently baking six loaves at a time repeatedly each morning at Orient Express on West 11th Street for his growing roster of clients and fans. Reach him at 347-335-5400 or on Instagram @richaud.nyc.

—Hannah Reimann
A Love Letter to New York, From the Midwest

By Adrianna Bojrab

As a Midwestern transplant typically located in the Lower West Side of New York City (just barely West Village, per city neighborhood boundaries, but cross the street and you’re in the East Village), I often hear of NYC referenced as a tough place. As it goes, the city gives you thick skin and you come out a shell of the person you once were. I’ve heard of this phenomenon as a double-edged sword, as thickness can alleviate the everyday abrasiveness of life but also serve as a barrier between you and warmth, a condition some refer to as coldness. However, my experience with New York City has been as opposite of that as it could be.

When I first arrived in New York with a one-way ticket I sat jittering with excitement in the back of a rickety plane, center seat, with my glass coffee pot balancing on my knees. As the old commercial plane banged onto the ground at LaGuardia, lacking any grace and in stark contrast to the monumental moment I felt internally, I immediately felt the pulse of the city like a surge of energy enveloping me. An often understated sentiment: I felt invincible (as had so many others before me). I had finally gotten my first big adult job in the city. As someone who has always had a bit of grind instilled in me, New York City, true to form, was a wave swelling in an ocean, swallowing me up whole and spinning me with the inertia of the undercurrents. Although at first I smiled through this, I recognized that the busy life made it easy to lose sight of what is truly important. As you readers may relate, it isn’t always the best ignition to be-"ing me up whole and spinning me with the inertia of the undercurrents. Although at first I smiled through this, I recognized that the busy life made it easy to lose sight of what is truly important. As you readers may relate, it isn’t always the best ignition to be-

...continued on page 27
Thirty Dollars Pays Your Rent On Bleecker Street*

The Way We Were

By Robert Heide and John Gilman

*lyric from the song Bleecker Street from Simon/Garfunkel album Wednesday Morning, 3 AM - 1964

Recently, in virtual quarantine during these pandemic times, having the constant reminders to stay home and only when it was essential to go out, to wear our masks, we became nostalgic for better times, i.e., the good old days. First thing we did was pull off the bookshelf our co-authored book, Greenwich Village—A Primo Guide to Shopping, Eating, and Making Merry in True Bohemia which was published by St. Martin’s Press 25 years ago, in 1995. Just by peeking inside we found the top of Greenwich Village in 1895, the Washington Square Arch was christened in gala pageantry attended by President Grover Cleveland and later, in 1916, was seized by Village Bohemians like artist Marcel Duchamp, writer John Reed, and others, who refused to leave until their demands for independence for Village residents were met by the Mayor. They also insisted on, and got delivered to their hideout atop the arch, jars of red wine. Our book, a reminiscence as well as a guide, went on to describe the exploits of many who lived and worked in the most famous neighborhood in the world including Maxwell My Life and Loves in Greenwich Village Bodenheim, Joe ‘Professor Scagull’ Gould, Ruth My Sister Eileen McKenney (who lived at 14 Gay Street), Edna St. Vincent Millay (named after the Village Hospital), who founded the Cherry Lane Theater, Eleanor Roosevelt, who established the Little Red Schoolhouse and lived with Fala the Scotty dog on the northwest corner of Washington Square after her husband, FDR, passed away while serving his 4th consecutive term as President, where Barbra Streisand sang (and was discovered—it was the Bon Soir on 8th Street), legendary actor and playwright Sam Shepard, Edward (Virginia Woolf?) Albee, the ‘three Js’ all of whom died at the age of 27, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, and Janis Joplin, Lou Reed, Edie Sedgwick, Andy Warhol, Bette Midler, and many, many more. The book also describes and recommends shops, restaurants, bars, and places of commerce and entertainment, many of which we knew sadly no longer exist. What old or new still did exist? We decided it was time to mask up, go out and take a walk with a pencil and a pad in hand.

First thing we saw, something new, and actually open, a barbershop named Haar & Co. Barbershop at 45 Christopher Street, down from Christopher Park and the now Historic Landmark, the Stonewall Inn and just across from Edgar Allen Poe’s old clinic, the Northern Dispensary, sporting a sparkling clean but distinctly and charmingly retro look inside and out. In the window are two French busts of 1920s men sporting neat hairstyles, displayed about them old barbershop accoutrements like ivory handled straight razors, vintage talcum tins, shaving tins, mirrors, brushes and combs. Inside the gleaming barber chairs and mirrors suggest the high style of Art Deco. All of this fit our nostalgic mood to a T and we went in to meet the handsome proprietor, Michael Haar who had opened his establishment two years ago, but had just re-opened after being closed, like every other place, for several months. He told us business was good but that he was operating under cautious health guidelines, which include wearing masks, and using only 50 percent capacity of his shop to maintain safe distancing. Shaving services were temporarily suspended, and reservations with Michael or one of his highly qualified barbers were strongly suggested to get one of his super individualistic haircuts—women’s glamour Pixie cuts are also offered by the congenial, mustachioed young host, Michael. Yes, there are barbers galore in Greenwich Village, but this one is obviously the best, and we made our appointments right away at Haar & Co., a distinctly pleasant spot on Christopher Street in historic Greenwich Village. Heaven knows, after how many months without, we very much needed a haircut. Michael offers a great selection of grooms products, which include Proraso, Texan and Marvis. Haar & Co’s hours are 11 to 8 weekdays, and 10 to 7 weekends. His telephone number is (212) 204-8617.

We realized that the really good times in the Village, for us, were the 1960s and 1970s. It was definitely a turbulent and transitional time. The US was in the middle of the Vietnam War, hotly contested in the Village; students were killed protesting it in 1970 at Kent State in Ohio. The Hippies had replaced the Beats. The disco era was upon us, led by Donna Summer. The first moon landing was in 1969. We were doing original plays at the Caffe Cino on Cornelia Street, including The Red Moon and At War With the Mongols. The Cino has been designated a cultural historical landmark, but of course, it is long gone. The Stonewall riots occurred in 1969 also, and there were many more changes afoot. We thought about odd pairings, Marlon Brando and Wally Cox (Mr. Peepers) on Waverly Place, Tiny Tim roommates with Bob Dylan, a West 4th Street, MacDougal Street stalwart, now the recipient of a National Prize. Some of our favorite places then and in the years following are still with us now, and have actually survived the business shutdowns. They include the Minetta Tavern, the wonderful Reggio Café, Chez Claude’s fabulous bakery, John’s Pizza, Joe’s on Carmine (best slices), and the branch new sparkling Two Boots, which moved from Greenwich Avenue to Sheridan Square to the former location of Mother Hubbard’s which nobody remembers, but we do, where you could get a Mother’s Big Three, a hamburger, a cup of coffee, and apple pie for $1.65 and then which became the Duchess, the first Lesbian bar in the neighborhood. We noted tables out front at Two Boots, which has slices and pies to go, and inside features almost a dozen images of the John Water’s great star Divine, who at one time was a Village regular. Other on the street dining is buzzing on Hudson—our favorite, Cowgirl and the White Horse (which closed with the Pandemic, then re-opened, served too many drinks to too many people, too close together, and then closed again), with new places on West 4th Street, Bleeker, Christopher and Grove Streets seeming to thrive, particularly on weekends.

The list goes on and on: places and people in memory only, and places new and old (and just a few masked people) still there. There are lots of great Village dogs having their walks. The Parks are blooming. Each day brings changes, good and bad, and Greenwich Village still thrums on. The good old days are gone, the memory lingers on, and the future stands as a big question mark. We can only send love and good cheer and yes, ‘We Must Persevere.’ We are thinking of World War II in this global pandemic and Vera Lynn, the great songstress who helped Great Britain win the war and who just passed away at age 104 on June 18, singing ‘We’ll meet again, don’t know where, don’t know when, but I know we’ll meet again some sunny day.’

In addition to Greenwich Village, Robert Heide and John Gilman are the authors of over a dozen books including O’New Jersey, Home Front America—Popular Culture of the World War II Era, Popular Art Deco, Box-Office Buckaroos, Disneyana, and Mickey Mouse, the Evolution, the Legend, the Phenomena. They are regular contributors to Westview News and Mr. Heide’s collection, Robert Heide 25 Plays, recently published by Fast Books, is available, as are all of the co-authors’ other books, on Amazon.

Photo by John Gilman.
One Good Tern

By Keith Michael

It’s the summer birthing doldrums.

I’m sitting on a shady bench in Hudson River Park. An unexpected boat regatta just sailed upriver, flags flying, horns celebrating. A decade ago, Millie would have pulled me to the park this Sunday afternoon and demanded to be lifted up onto this bench —too high for her corgi legs to jump—to laze an hour similarly watching the passersby, and hesitantly accepting head pats from admirers. These days, no walks to the park, no being picked up to sit on benches, and especially, no head scratches from strangers. On a hot day like today she’s at home snoozing near the air-conditioner, perhaps dreaming of ice cubes sailing through her water bowl.

No Robins singing, no Sparrows squabbling, no Starlings trilling, no Cathedrals caterwauling, no Mockingbirds mocking the rest of them. They’re there. But it’s siesta time.

The river is somewhat more active. A smattering of Ring-billed Gulls loaf on the pilings. A Great Black-backed Gull, bobbing in the waves still rickocheting from shore to shore after the passing of the regatta, struggles with a fish. One snake-necked Double-crested Cormorant flies surprisingly quickly across the Jersey City skyline, another is modeling the classic “hanging its wings out to dry” silhouette on top of a piling, while a third cruises along in the water, its back nearly submerged and turquoise eyes sparkling, then with a little hiccup arc, dives for an afternoon snack.

But my favorite birds of the afternoon are the four Common Terns that have called this stretch of the river home since the end of May. Common Terns are a smaller, arguably more graceful version of the gull: sleek white body, jaunty black cap, snappy black-tipped red bill, and a sartori ally elegant swallow tail. All four of them are lounging, socially distanced, on the Pier 49 pile field. They’re far from strangers to the area. Several thousand pairs nest out at Breezy Point, Queens, and a smaller colony of about a hundred have made the decommissioned piers of Governor’s Island their home for a decade.

Remarkably though, this is the first year we’ve been graced with the presence of Common Terns along the West Village throughout the spring and summer. Early in June, I watched both pairs do their courting rituals around these same pilings—the circling flights, the swelled-chest dancing and bowing, the male’s presentation of a fish to the female, “Hey, look, I’m a great provider!” Watching these courtships, I had hoped that they might be moving into the neighborhood, maybe homesteading on the Covid-closed playground pier. But I’ve seen no evidence of family-raising routines. Maybe these four are young birds from last summer still playing at being grown-ups.

Common Terns are one of the world’s longest distance migrants. These New York summer birds have spent the winter as far south as the coast of Argentina, only to return 15,000 miles later to lay this season’s eggs not a dozen feet from where they scraped together a few shells to call home last summer. With exposed nests on sandy beaches, terns sometimes need to sit over their eggs not only to keep them warm but to shade them from the heat of the sun—protecting the eggs from frying!

Terns fish for a living. Watching their technique is one of the great pleasures of my summer. Parents teach their fledglings how to do it, and watching the palpable consternation of the youngsters try-try-again practice takes me right back to my own childhood humiliation learning to play baseball. But the parents are both patient as well as “tough love” insistant that the kids learn to do it themselves. I’ve watched a parent with a fish in its bill nearly taunt a hungry child as if to say, “Go ahead, you can do it. Go get one for yourself!”

But how do they do it? Terns hunt by sight. If you follow one tern, you’ll see them make long looping flights up and down the river, occasionally passing at arm’s length from the promenade railing. Once they spot a fish near the water’s surface, they’ll hover midair while focusing below them, then tuck their wings and plunge straight down in an Olympic medalist’s dive of pure form. It seems that after the splash, more often than not, they don’t get the fish. Which means another flight, hover, and dive. The amount of energy expended on each four-inch silver fish seems extraordinary, and the number of miles flown every day, not to mention throughout a lifetime, is unfathomable.

The summer’s Canada Goose family sails by heading upriver—the gander in front, the four now adult-plumpaged goslings in the middle, followed by the ever-protective hen. The sun has dipped to that imperceptible angle that marks the waning of the afternoon. The quartet of terns have roused. I missed them taking flight.

A decade ago, I would have helped Millie off of the bench and we’d saunter home. Today, it’s just me and my shadow.
North Country
A wonderful summer escape at a fraction of the cost of the Hamptons

By Eric Uhlfelder

For decades, when I ventured to the Catskills it was to ski. When the temperatures turned hot and humid, I would head to the East End of Long Island to pleasant hotels and B&Bs. My photography hung in local galleries, and for a long time I felt a part of the place.

But increasingly, over the years, I’ve felt like I didn’t belong as the crowds got prettier and snootier and local establishments turned in kind. So, I gave the Catskills a try during the summer. Despite being 50 miles further away than the Hamptons, it’s been well worth the effort.

The Catskills has a long list of admirers. They inspired the writings of Henry David Thoreau, Washington Irving, and the painters of the 19th century Hudson River School. During that time and well into the 20th century the region was a major summertime destination of New Yorkers.

Back in the day, if you couldn’t afford a car, you could get to the Catskills from the city by large paddle wheel boats or railroad. While the boats have long stopped operating, Amtrak’s ride along the Hudson is one of the great scenic rail trips in the country and gets you close—to the town of Hudson. Rent a car, and in 45 minutes you're in Windham—my favorite destination.

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And while there are many fine places to stay in the town, the one that makes me feel most at home—whether I’m with a friend or on my own—is The Thompson House. Owner Eric Goettsche, his wife Deb, their son Kurt and his wife Darya, learned this way of inn-keeping from generations of their family that managed the five-building resort over the past 140 years.

Windham itself is a close-knit village melded together by a strong sense of community and civic responsibility. “Everyone volunteers,” explains Eric. And this was never more evident than when Hurricane Irene broke a local damn and caused massive flooding. Being on higher ground, The Thompson House became a rescue center for some who were unable to be in their homes, and for first responders who came from far away to help.

Eric has seen a change in clientele over the decades. “Generations of families used to gather here annually, some coming from hundreds of miles away.” These days, most guests are single families and individuals like myself who are looking for a few days of escape.

I’m happy just reading and working in my large well-adorned room, hanging out on my spacious balcony with a drop-dead view, or going out for a bike ride, especially on the nearby Windham Path that takes you around a beautiful nature preserve.

There’s tennis, a heated pool, and a golf course right next door. Not far away there are scenic train rides, lakes for swimming and canoeing, and horseback riding. And for those who want to go vertical, walk down the road to the ski lift at Windham Mountain and ride to the top, hike down, or mountain bike if you’re so inclined. In the evenings the hotel has movie nights, a recreational room and gym, and an outdoor firepit.

“We’re following CDC guidelines to the T,” says Eric. “The staff all wear masks, rooms are thoroughly sanitized, no one enters your room during your stay, and guests pick up their meals and eat on their balconies or in many of our wide-open spaces.”

So while we feel shortchanged by a summer of Covid, where beaches and much of the city don’t feel particularly safe, head up north for an experience worth having.

The Thompson House is located on Route 296, just off of Route 23 in Windham. Website: thompsonhouse.com. Tel: 518.734.4500

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WestView cares about you.
Stay safe, stay healthy,
and follow the guidelines
to protect yourself against Covid-19

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Feed Your Soul
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Karen’s Quirky Style

By Karen Rempel | Fashion Editor

My fashion sense was influenced by the ’80s glam metal scene, which was fostered by the punk rock scene in NYC in the ’70s. The Velvet Underground was Andy Warhol’s house band, spawning Lou Reed’s shattering Rock n’ Roll Animal in 1973. At the same time, Jean-Michel Basquiat was blazing a meteor trail to stardom in the art world. Junkies and dealers were in every doorway. This was the exciting, sordid scene of the ’70s in the East Village. For a taste of this time and place, check out my YouTube video “Heroin Trip on East Fourth.”

I missed the gritty ’70s by decades, alas, but on my first trip to NYC—in 2014—I wandered around the Bowery, feeding into the reverberations from that time. I was startled to see concert posters for Mötley Crüe slathered everywhere. (Neck injury, ouch!) I was a bit disappointed that the beer-swilling bikers in their sixties sitting next to me at the Garden were very polite and said “Excuse me” each time they passed me to get another beer. Not the tough New York crowd I had anticipated. But Mötley Crüe rocked the Garden even harder, tighter, and fiercer than they did in the ’80s. Truly one of the most exciting concerts of my life. The band has sold over 100 million albums worldwide. After the recent release of their new Netflix biopic, The Dirt, they tore up their “Never tour again” contract, rolling out a stadium tour for 2021. No NYC dates are planned yet, sadly.

When NoHo photographer Philip Maier suggested we do this month’s shoot at the Basquiat plaque on Great Jones Street, the confluence of punk and metal style moments came together in a flash in my mind. I gathered inspiration from Nancy Spungen, Wendy O. Williams, and the master himself, Lou Reed, and then added the Crüe concert tee to tie it all together—with a poignant message—“All Bad Things Must Come to an End.” May it be so! (Plagues, police clashes, presidents.) To honor Jean-Michel, I designed my eye make-up using colors and shapes from his art.

Basquiat began as a Lower East Side graffiti artist in the duo SAMO, in the late ’70s, and by the ’80s, his neo-expressionist paintings were exhibited in galleries and museums internationally. Andy Warhol—Basquiat’s friend and mentor—let him live and work in this former stable on Great Jones Street. Despite attempts at sobriety, Basquiat died tragically in 1988 of a heroin overdose at age 27. In 2017, his 1982 painting of a black skull with red and black rivulets (Untitled) set a new record high for any American artist at auction, selling for $110.5 million. This graffitied doorway shows some of Basquiat’s work and pays homage to his unique visionary language.

For more details and brilliant Philip Maier photos, see karenquirkystyle.com.

The Ghost of Professional Journalism

By Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

When I bought the former home of Walter Williams in 2000, totally unaware of its illustrious past, the purchase changed my life.

Williams built his Federalist-style brick home in 1917 during his years as the founding Dean of the Missouri School of Journalism at the University of Missouri in Columbia, founded in 1903, known world-wide as the first and best professional school of journalism. Williams, propagator of journalism schools globally and known as “the father of journalism education,” was the most famous American lecturing internationally after Mark Twain had begun (a fellow Missourian).

I enjoyed writing and had done my share for various publications since high school. But I had chosen architecture for my profession, providing architectural services for many neighbors in that college town, and raising my family of five just two blocks away in a new home of my own devices. But the Williams’ home seemed a world away from my quotidian life.

We are in a time of turmoil in the publishing world; newspapers are struggling to define how people get their news and to survive in their communities. A New York Times 6/29/20 business article by Ben Smith described one defining episode for journalism. It provided a reminder of the late 1800s world when Williams grew up in rural Missouri, and also of cities all across America at that time. Newspapers, broadsheets, and pamphlets were published by anyone who could put a printing press to work—often with libelous statements, false accusations, incitement to riot, condemnation of the law-abiding, and fictional accounts as common fodder in these “yellow rags” of news. (Sounds familiar?)

Editors and journalists like Williams needed to do something about that deplorable state of misinformation, and set about forming press organizations to pursue integrity in their ranks. First in Missouri, then nationally at conferences, they pieced together a set of principles to be shared with all their colleagues.

Here are highlights of the “The Journalist’s Creed” by Walter Williams, now taught at journalism schools in many countries.

"I believe in the profession of journalism. I believe that the public journal is a public trust, that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of lesser service than the welfare of society, is indefensible."

I believe that suppression of the news, for any consideration other than the welfare of society, is indefensible."

I believe that the WestView News publication honors these principles (updated for all genders). Which brings me back to that fateful day of moving into Walter Williams’ home. Both my wife and I were soon inspired to embark on new directions in our careers. She began her journey from local hospital nurse to nationally recognized health speaker and writer. I ramped up to organize and lead the historic preservation endeavors, promoting healthy architecture, walkable communities, and resource conservation. And then, to the opportunity to contribute to WestView News. Inspired by the elegant restored house we moved into, or channeling the ghost of Walter Williams? Who knows how inspiration works?

BY KAREN REMPEL | FASHION EDITOR

Karen’s Quirky Style

My fashion sense was influenced by the ’80s glam metal scene, which was fostered by the punk rock scene in NYC in the ’70s. The Velvet Underground was Andy Warhol’s house band, spawning Lou Reed’s shattering Rock n’ Roll Animal in 1973. At the same time, Jean-Michel Basquiat was blazing a meteor trail to stardom in the art world. Junkies and dealers were in every doorway. This was the exciting, sordid scene of the ’70s in the East Village. For a taste of this time and place, check out my YouTube video “Heroin Trip on East Fourth.”

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I believe that the WestView News publication honors these principles (updated for all genders). Which brings me back to that fateful day of moving into Walter Williams’ home. Both my wife and I were soon inspired to embark on new directions in our careers. She began her journey from local hospital nurse to nationally recognized health speaker and writer. I ramped up to organize and lead the historic preservation endeavors, promoting healthy architecture, walkable communities, and resource conservation. And then, to the opportunity to contribute to WestView News. Inspired by the elegant restored house we moved into, or channeling the ghost of Walter Williams? Who knows how inspiration works?
boxes and sticky-countered dark beer pubs, bringing me back to my south-eastern Michigan roots (forever “home” and a foundation to me). As I grew up, I traveled beyond New York as much as I could to gain inspiration and new perspectives on life, music, cultures and art, and became quite crafty at budget-traveling. Once back in the city, I’d take a lap around the block, notice how many new trees had bloomed or new places had opened and, as always, started re-discovering the beautiful mix of new and old around me.

I’m forever partial, however, to old New York. To barbershops where everyone knows each other’s names and asks about your mother. To me, the most beautiful thing is the modern-day reflection of immigrants who once bid tearful goodbyes to close-knit family members with promises to work hard and send for them one day. Still very much alive in the city is the current acknowledgement and appreciation of all those who have come to New York and passed through Ellis Island in search of a better life. Their mark on the city and the generations they left behind is what makes New York the eclectic and dynamic “melting pot” that it is. The nonnas with their unaltered recipes, made with their great-grandmother’s pasta pot, and their refusal to hold the cheese. The chain-smoking grandfather that buys the same coffee from the corner cart every day with exact change. The beautiful past of the city that still shapes present-day New York. The ethnic delis, the family bakeries, the corner newspaper shops and the hand painted signs of neighborhood butchers and doctors. The farmers markets, the shoe-repair man, the locksmith, and your local bartender who knows what tequila you like without asking. Even the lurch and squeal of the subway, the saxophone and chess players in the park, the piano man in Washington Square Park, the way the sky reflects off the 1920s art-deco inspired arches of the Chrysler building that was once the tallest building in the world.

I think that New York makes you appreciate what matters most and simplify life. As if standing still in a roaring river, once you stop running laps around the city to keep the pace of the energy, you’ll find the things that don’t slip away with the tide are all you need. The city takes you in and spits you out, it’s true. However, this process is illuminating and you quickly realize that if you are left with your family, your health, and a few quality friends you are truly lucky. I feel endlessly grateful to live with my oldest childhood friend (who happens to share the same name as mine), my cousins dotting up and down the West Side. A fire escape doesn’t hurt either (another discovery is that a landing doesn’t constitute a fire escape without an actual ladder per NYSL, so go ahead and grow that basil!) I think NYC takes and absorbs the disposable things and leaves you with the true jewels of life. Rather than thickening skin, I believe New York sheds layers. You shed what doesn’t work anymore and strengthen what does, and you’re left with all you need: a strengthened foundation, a widened perspective, and true friendships, all discovered by sticking to your guns and determining what you stand for. It’s such a perplexing juxtaposition, how the busiest and craziest city in the world can become the most calming and centering for many—if you learn to mute the noise of the hustle and bustle, and the far-away ambulances and honking horns of yellow cabs in rush hours. It’s almost like life has become more minimal here. Physically, this is true, as most of our apartments cannot hold all of our possessions and we’re forced to cut the excess; but it is true internally also, and induces a deep feeling of gratefulness for things once ignored or underappreciated—the way the sun streams into your window, a light breeze on a hot day, a shared laugh or knowing smile from a stranger on the subway. Amongst all the chaos, what matters most is all that survives—love, peace, chosen family, sticking to your guns, and reasonably following your heart and passions.

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Love Letter continued from page 22
A Room of Our Own
By Sandra DiPasqua

This is a story about the creative writing program for senior citizens that I have been organizing for the past three years, and some of the ways that it has made a difference in these seniors’ lives.

We come together around a rectangular table each week to share stories and memories. Our room to write is in the same building where many of the seniors live: Encore Community Services, a space in the Theater District providing a variety of services to any and all senior citizens.

The room itself is simple, if a little cluttered, with boxes, a table and chairs, an unplugged coffee machine and a constantly humming air conditioner in the summer. Between six and ten students come depending on the week (and their interest in the previous week’s writing assignment) to write and share. The people who inhabit this room each week have become important characters not just in my story, but also in each other’s. We’ve enriched each other’s lives, honed sensibilities, become braver and more vulnerable, and claimed or reclaimed ownership of a craft we have all grown to rely on. Below are the perspectives of three of the students who regularly come to the class.

Cindy Breedy lives in Queens with her husband of twenty-six years, her son, and their four cats. She has traveled to all seven continents in the world. She once shared that she had experienced several mild strokes and had been suffering from clinical depression; “I was at one of the lowest points in my life, when a friend started telling me about a writing class at the Encore Senior Center. I really didn’t want to go; it was [already] a struggle to get out of bed in the morning. Finally, I got tired of hounding me, so I agreed to go one time just to get her to stop. I had no intention of going again.” Cindy joined our group, and never left again. “The writing class, headed up by Sandra DiPasqua, became not just the heart of Encore, but for me, it became a lifeline. My handwriting is nearly restored to the beauty it once was, my thoughts are clearer, and I can focus much better. My depth perception has improved. I am a better and happier person today, thanks to my friend who got me to my writing class.”

Sandra Rodriguez is a native New Yorker, singer and dancer. Sandy decided to join our writing group, she loved writing and was an avid reader as a child. She shared with me that the writing group inspired her to go back to college to finish her degree. “The group was therapeutic and creative for me at a traumatic time in my life. [Thanks to it] I felt smart enough.” She went back to college at 69 years old, finishing her degree after being out of school for 24 years. Sandra majored in psychology and minored in writing. She is now 71 years old and is fondly referred to as “The Graduate” by her peers.

Peter Gallinari is a longtime member who made appearances in over 30 movies and television shows. In Peters’ own words: “Most of us carry our stories around with us in our heads and hearts. They are important to us, but we never think that anyone else would be interested. To my surprise, when they are read to the group they are met with interest and acceptance. This gave me validation and the impetus to continue writing. It keeps me connected and engaged. With the support of the group, I probably would never have been able to express myself in such an honest way. It gave me the courage to keep writing and share my life.”

Night Light
By Kieran Loughnane

Isolation. Lockdown. Seclusion. Words now part of my daily conversation bring me back to a time when these terms had a different context. I return in my mind to a place where another invisible enemy was confronted. A place where there were strict limits on personal freedom and no assurance of a positive outcome.

On a frigid February night 25 years ago, as a psychiatric aide at a small hospital in Pennsylvania, I began my usual rounds. Flashlight in hand, I silently entered each room. Medicated patients slept in narrow beds which doubled as couches during the day. Snores and body odor greeted me.

This tranquil scene suggested that the night might pass peacefully. The staff would often spend time reading, drawing or chatting between checks on patients. But the dullness of routine invited complacency, danger’s loyal ally. One could easily forget during periods of calm that at any moment a crisis might ignite.

At the start of the shift, my coworker, a female nurse, and I learned that among the new patients on the unit was a 24-year-old homeless woman diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia. Confined to the security room, Angel was separated from the other patients—for safety concerns.

The security room is the last place anyone would choose to spend time. With a steel framed bed bolted to the floor, a small window covered with a metal grate and a heavy door with an industrial lock, the room is designed for one purpose: to isolate and control the patient.

If needed, leather straps are fastened to the bed frame. Attached to the straps are padded cuffs which can be adjusted to fit wrists and ankles and then locked in place, making the patient immobile and safe from harming herself or others.

I continued down the hall to the locked door of the security room and aimed my torch through the small diamond wired window. The beam picked up a glint of metal in Angel’s small fist.

I heard the click of a lighter, saw the spark and then the flame. I switched on the light and quickly unlocked the door with a large key.

Angel’s pale blue eyes flashed in dark orbits. Her face was ruddy from exposure to the elements. She wore a backless hospital gown. Her twig-like legs dangled from the bed. I approached her as she quickly put the lighter behind her back, slipping it into her panties.

When patients are admitted, they are first read a list of rights. They are then required to strip down to their underwear and are checked for any contraband such as sharp objects, drugs or matches or lighters. The body check is a critically important step in ensuring safety on the unit. Somehow, Angel’s lighter had escaped the attention of the staff.

Back ing out of the room, I looked for the female nurse. No one was in the nurse’s station. My only coworker had taken a bathroom break.

That was the moment Angel chose to set fire to the bed sheets on her right and behind her. I turned toward her as she lit a fire on her left. Flames on three sides of her rose a foot high and smoke billowed toward the ceiling. Angel remained motionless. I grabbed the lighter from her hand while carefully lowering her body to the floor. Crouching behind her, I gave her a firm push and slid her across the floor and out of the room. I then gathered the bedding in upon itself, quickly extinguishing the fire.

Angel sat quietly on the hallway floor, exited the Encore writer’s group. I probably would never have been able to express myself in such an honest way. It gave me the courage to keep writing and share my life.”

I myself have been doing pro-bono design work for Encore for the last fifteen years. I approached the person at Encore about three years ago who ran their educational programs, and originally asked if I could teach a class. They told me that they already had art classes, and then asked me if I would be interested in teaching creative writing. I had never studied writing, but I have worked with writers and editors my entire life. I was excited to do a class where I could learn alongside the Encore members as I taught them. There was something special about us all having parallel experiences.

To me, the most important part of having started this group is getting to amplify the voices of the Encore community. Everyone has a story, and those stories deserve to be heard. Listening to the members of the group share their lives and helping them to find ways to share themselves with others outside of the group, has been an incredible gift. The people in this group and the work that we have done together shifted the trajectory of my life for the better, and in putting together this piece, it has touched me to hear that they feel the same way.

EVERYONE HAS A STORY, AND THOSE STORIES DESERVE TO BE HEARD: The Encore creative writing group enjoying a funny moment from a story that was read out loud. Photo by Sandra DiPasqua.
Looking Back from Life

By Barry Benepe

I once asked my therapist, Alice Gerstman, how many people who had returned to life from death were grateful and how many disturbed at being wakened from a deep sleep. She replied, “About half and half.” None reported a glimpse of heaven or even purgatory.

Several years ago, a close friend told me that a couple were desperately seeking help for a fatal illness of the wife. While traveling through Europe, consulting specialists, she finally said, “Let us stop chasing life and share my experience of dying. He consented and she shared. “I see a great overwhelmingly beautiful shining light approaching,” she exclaimed with a grateful smile, and quietly died. Another person reported a similar experience.

In 1959, while driving in Rome, I was hailed by a man holding his father, asking me to take them to a hospital. His father died in my car, quietly and peacefully.

In 1978, my own father, while driving north from Florida with my stepmother Jane to East Hampton, pulled over to a gas tank to fill up. “We recently filled,” she said. “I just wanted to get some here where it’s cheap.

While waiting in line he put his head back to doze. “You can pull up now, Bob.” When he didn’t respond, she discovered that he was dead. He must have had a premonition.

My mother-in-law lay very quietly on her hospice bed when her last breath lifted an invisible feather into the air.

At the age of 92, already nine years older than my father when he died, I have reached a profound and moving sense of existence. There is the realization that there are two experiences of knowledge. One is the world of “shoes and socks,” as William James called it, and the other was existence outside this world. He experimented with other dreams, which I replicated with my college roommate, a pre-med student. And indeed I was in another existence looking down and also in the universe itself, I must choose it.

It is a tale told by an idiot building my old life, if a better one presents itself, I must choose it. However many more days, weeks, or years I am afforded, I want them to be lived on purpose with purpose. How about you?

Silver Linings

By Christina Raccuia

For many of us, this crisis has forced us to change direction. Many of my friends and patients have lost jobs, businesses, investments, and loved ones. Familiar routines are gone, and the security many people felt before was gone in an instant.

While there is a great deal of tragedy in the pandemic—and I don’t want to be careful about the reality and loss many people are experiencing—there is another reality that is beginning to emerge from the pandemic. Perhaps this crisis presents an unexpected opportunity.

Is it possible to find a silver lining in the dark cloud of COVID-19?

We are now more than 3 1/2 months into our own Control-Alt-Delete experience of sheltering at home. Adrenaline might still be high from the sudden change, but maybe our minds are calm enough to evaluate and reconsider.

Could we harness this unexpected and unwanted crisis and tame it for a better future for us and our families? One thing is for sure, things will never be the same. The only real question is, how will they be different for you?


Life is more than earning a ton of money, more than pursuing vain success, and so much more than amassing material possessions.

For some of us, what we have been chasing has been stripped away in an instant—and now we are left with a longing for what is truly important. Others of us have now been forced to hit the pause button long enough to let the dust settle in our lives and see what a mess we’re making.

For me, it’s more clear than ever that life is found in love for others, in kindness and generosity, in relationships with family and friends, and in the pursuit of my spirituality and self-care.

I have to find a way to remove what is distracting me from these essential things and continue to hear this call clearly even when things return “back to normal.” Life is so much more.


Life was moving at a blistering pace when the virus hit and slowed things down in a hurry. The good thing is—it has been driving home the importance of living now and not just waiting to live later.

Later might never come. Or perhaps even worse, it might come and I wasted years getting there. It’s too easy to just let life happen to us.

The virus has helped me to be more grateful for what I have, for the important work I get to do, for the health I have to do it, and for the resources I have to live simply with the ones I love around me.

My new normal cannot be filled with wasted effort or trivial pursuits. Regardless of how much time and energy I spent building my old life, if a better one presents itself, I must choose it.
By Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

THEN: The Sullivan Street Industrial School was designed in 1891-1892 by Vaux & Radford for the Children’s Aid Society (CAS). Photo credit: 1895 photo from GVSHP Archives.

NOW: In sales websites, this is deceptively labeled as “a modern renovation within the 39’ wide ‘Vaux Mansion,’” an original masterwork by... Calvert Vaux” (and the GVSHP site erroneously says it was razed for a new residential development). Photo credit: Brian J. Pape, AIA.

THEN: The Sullivan Street Industrial School at 219 Sullivan Street was designed in 1891-1892 by Vaux & Radford for the Children’s Aid Society (CAS), a pioneering charity organization. Although deeply rooted in Greenwich Village, CAS’s roots go deeper and wider than that. Looking back at some early social service efforts, German educator Friedrich Froebel opened the world’s first kindergarten (the word translates as “children’s garden”) in Blanken-burg, Germany in 1837. This was a radical move, as children under seven years of age weren’t considered teachable. Froebel also became famous for inventing Froebel Blocks, wooden toys for children. Frank Lloyd Wright credited Froebel Blocks for nurturing his blossoming creativity.

The first kindergarten in America was opened in 1856 by Margarethe Schurz for her immigrant German community in Watertown, Wisconsin. The famous Octagon House was also built, ca. 1854, in Watertown by pioneer settler John Richards, inspired by New York architect Orson Fowler who, in the 1850s, promoted the healthy living aspects of octagonal dwellings. The mansion was donated in 1938 to the fledgling Watertown Historical Society, on which site now stands the home of the first kindergarten. As a schoolboy, this author visited the site several times, leaving an indelible positive impression on him.

In 1873, Saint Louis, Missouri became the first school district to have a public-school kindergarten. Back in New York City, with over 10,000 children living on the streets, Protestant minister Charles Loring Brace (1826-1890), a member of the Carmine Street/West Presbyterian Church, along with Reverend William C. Russell and Rever- end Benjamin Howland, officially chartered the Children’s Aid Society in February of 1863. Over the course of the century, CAS successfully provided short and long-term housing for children in home-like lodging houses (CAS ceased housing children in 1910), developed a number of industrial schools that taught students trades to facilitate their employment, and contributed enormously to the growth of social services across the country, policies and programs which were replicated widely by similar organizations thereafter. In addition to offering industrial and domestic arts classes, these industrial schools broke new ground by providing visiting nurse programs, free dental clinics, nutritional education, and the first kindergartens in New York.

Child labor was common in New York City’s sweatshops, and social services were virtually non-existent. At the time, the city’s disenfranchised children were perceived as unskilled laborers who could do work needed in rural areas. From 1853 till the last train trip in 1859, more than 200,000 children rode the CAS’s “Orphan Train” to new lives in rural midwestern communities. Starting in 1874 the CAS supported entire families relocating together.

Brace enlisted his friend, architect Calvert Vaux, to undertake the designs of the Society’s dozen lodging houses, characterized by ornamental features that recalled Dutch architecture, meant to contrast with “ugly” surroundings that prevailed then.

The Tompkins Square Lodging House for Boys and Industrial School at 295-297 East 6th Street, ca. 1886, is the oldest extant building (and is landmarked). The 14th Ward (Sixth Street) Industrial School at 650-634 East 6th Street was built ca. 1889 with a terra-cotta panel showcasing the initials of CAS set in foliate ornament above a carved inscription with the name of the school. Over the entrance Vaux incorporated a terra cotta plaque with the letter “A” commemorating the contribution of the Astor family. These earlier CAS designs had Victorian Gothic details, oriel bay windows, and Dutch influences attempting to evoke the feeling and image of a “snug country inn.”

The Industrial School at 219 Sullivan Street features steep rooflines with Dutch “Crowstep” stepped masonry gable ends and ornamental horizontal bands that unite the sills of various windows. The four-story building was constructed with selected common brick, laid with red mortar, and trimmed with stone. But instead of previous Victorian Gothic details, this design shows a modernist (for the time) restraint, with no pointed arches, no bow windows, and much less ornament. Central orthogonal projections for three windows on the second and third floors are topped with an arched window on the 4th floor.

NOW: In sales websites, this is deceptively labeled as “a modern renovation within the 39’ wide ‘Vaux Mansion,’” an original masterwork by... Calvert Vaux” (and the GVSHP site erroneously says it was razed for a new residential development).

By 2009 when the Sullivan Street Industrial School was honored with a Village Preservation Award, it had been renamed the Philip Coltoff Center, in honor of the former CEO of the CAS. Then, in 2010, despite serving 1,000 students in its school programs, CEO Richard R. Buery Jr. said it was no longer fulfilling its mission of helping the poor, since more resources and opportunity were in the South Bronx; it was put up for sale.

The developer Broad Street bought this and adjacent properties, and the designer Rawlings Architects built a new structure in 2014 to work with the surrounding context, including the CAS building, since it was part of the South Village Historic District designated in 2013. The actual former CAS school exterior facades, both west and south, were restored and incorporated into the new 25-unit, seven-story condominium addressed as 215 Sullivan Street.

The preserved portion of CAS was then labeled “Townhouse A,” a six-bedroom, seven-bath, 7,436 sq.ft. triplex unit, which last sold for $17,250,000. A comparable new duplex townhouse unit in the building closed at $13,250,000 or $32,500 for rent, for 4,639 square feet, including five bedrooms and five baths.

Today, Children’s Aid, its current modified name, with a brand-new logo and added tag line, “Every step of the way,” serves nearly 50,000 children, youth, and their families at more than 40 sites in the South Bronx, Harlem, Washington Heights, and northern Staten Island.

Most Children’s Aid programs are free for children, youth, and families across New York City, and they are committed to fighting bigotry and racism, said CEO (since 2014) Phoebe Boyer. Some of the early childhood programs provide education on a sliding scale based on need. They accept Medicaid, Child Health Plus, and commercial insurance for health care services provided at their community and school-based health centers.

Children’s Aid has announced plans to move its headquarters from midtown to a new office space at West 124th Street and Lenox Avenue in Harlem by summer 2020, although that date is probably too optimistic. For additional information, contact Anthony Ramos at (212) 949-4938 or anthony@childrensAidNYC.org.

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I held out my hand and said, “I’ve got her lighter.” I felt good about what I had done that night. Angel was safe. I had taken charge of a dangerous situation. Control here changed hands without warning, though. To keep the control in staff hands, choices were made. Choices which either protected patients and staff or put everyone at risk.

On another night shift here, George, who had a history of manic depression was locked in the security room and held in four-point restraints. A two-hundred-sixty - pound former football lineman, he had spent years in a state mental hospital and was placed on a powerful drug to manage his psychotic and sometimes violent behavior. The doctor treating him at my facility opted to discontinue his medication.

George had been bound to the bed all day. He was now shouting, cursing, demanding to use the bathroom. For a patient to be released, the unit policy was clear. A doctor would be contacted by phone and asked to issue the order. Two security guards would then be summoned to the unit. Only then could the patient be unshackled. On this night, however, a thin, middle-aged female co-worker took pity on George. She released him from restraints and from the security room without authorization, violating the policy.

As staff we often faced a choice between strictly following a protocol or granting patients a bit of freedom and dignity by bending the rules. A small liberty could be granted as a reward or to build trust.

Some staff imposed harsh limits or denied rights. The worst of these workers inflicted physical abuse. They might twist an arm or punch a patient to subdue or control them. It sickened and angered me to witness it. Even more troubling was, when informed of abuse, management turned a blind eye.

The aide walked George to the nearby bathroom. When he was finished I saw him exit and quickly joined them. Our mission now: persuade him to return to his confined space. His protest began immediately. He stood in the hall, determined to remain there, a massive immovable force.

George was nearly twice my size. We knew of his attacks on staff members. He had seriously injured two workers at a state hospital. Getting confrontational with this man was, for me, not an option. I chose an “I’m on your side” approach. Calmly, almost apologetically, I tried to get him to cooperate. I kept my hands down, lowered my voice and tried to reassure him that he’d be allowed to join the other patients in the morning. But George, unlike many patients who had responded well to this approach in the past, was having none of it.

“I know it’s awful in there,” I told him empathetically. George knew awful didn’t come close to describing being bound to a bed in a locked room for hours. Unable to do as much as scratch an itch or to raise his head more than a few inches, he faced further humiliation by having to ask permission to use the bathroom. George had spent the last several hours enduring deprivation that very few of us will ever know.

As an exercise while training for my staff position, I’d been locked briefly in those cuffs myself, in that same room. Those few minutes, while uncomfortable, revealed only a flicker of the helplessness a patient must feel. With no way for one to estimate how long confinement might last, a gnawing desperation to be freed surely intensified as each minute passed.

George paused for a moment, considering his next move. His eyes narrowed as he glared at me, his face reddening. He lunged toward me. In an instant, his beefy hands clutched my ribcage. Lifting me completely off the floor, George propelled me toward the safety glass of the nearby nurses’ station window. The nurse inside called for help. Uniformed security guards arrived seconds later. George continued in a rage until he was wrestled back into restraints and subdued with the injection of a powerful sedative.

In the moment George came toward me, control of the situation was his. My role was caregiver, protector and now, suddenly, my own safety was jeopardized.

While I had extinguished the small fire Angel had set, I underestimated the burning intensity of George’s anger and frustration. I worked in this setting for years, seeing hundreds of patients with a wide variety of psychiatric challenges. When this crisis hit, I overlooked one essential truth.

By boldly claiming to empathize with George’s situation, I was complicit in his outburst. This troubled man saw me act as if I knew who he was and what he had been through. For George, that must have been particularly upsetting. At the time, I saw this attack as the culmination of bad choices made by others. It’s clear now, 25 years later, that my actions also were misguided.

To claim to know George’s pain was pure fiction and fiction certainly had no place in this setting. In this situation, in this dark place, it’s hard enough for anyone, staff or patient, to see the light of sanity.

Weeks turn into months now of restriction and isolation as Covid-19 claims more lives with no clear end in sight. I appreciate now, as never before, the terrible weight of mental illness. It gives me pause now to consider those lives controlled by unseen forces as, in a small way, mine is today. And in that pause, a glimmer of hope emerges. We have all been confined to the security room now, in a sense. When the restraints come off, surely, we will have been changed by the experience.
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