Obscene Graffiti Scars Village

By George Capsis

In 1917 the City ruthlessly cut through the handsome historic townhouses of the Village to run the 7th Avenue subway through it and left ugly towering blackened back-yard raw brick walls. A few months ago, after the Black Lives Matter incident, huge crude nonsensical graffiti messages appeared like "MAGIC TRICK" with the R in Trick painted upside down and an unreadable telephone number.

The graffiti is all of a comic book style and angry—very angry—ugly and crude and huge. Huge with in-your-face contempt and anger.

I called the Police Press office, DCPI, to learn if they were aware of these slashing outbursts of obscene graffiti - were they city-wide or just concentrated in certain areas like the Village, and had they identified any graffiti gangs, and if so where do these graffiti gangs hang out - Brooklyn, Manhattan, or the Bronx, and literally minutes before we sent the file to the printer, I got a concerned call from the head of police press office's commanding officer Alfred Baker who knew of our publication, and was equally concerned, and promised to thoroughly investigate and report for the December issue.

Village Voters Show Enthusiasm, Patience, Hope in First Day of Early Voting

By Bob Cooley

In what leaders and many citizens have called "a fight for the soul of our nation," West Villagers and New Yorkers turned out in massive numbers during the initial day of first-ever early presidential voting in the City.

1,211 West Village residents turned out to cast their early vote at the community space of St. Anthony's of Padua on Sullivan St., just one of the 88 early polling places across the five boroughs, along with hundreds who showed up to hand in their absentee ballots in person. Overall 93,830 New Yorkers checked in for early voting on the first day.

Village resident Nicole DeFilippi, who showed up 30 minutes before the polls opened at 10 am on Saturday with her mother, Lori, said her wait in line was 2½ hours until they made it inside the polling center. Of her experience in the line, she said, "Honestly, it wasn't that bad. I was nervous at first that it would take like four or five hours, but once the doors opened, the line kept moving pretty quickly... for the most part everyone was polite and kept socially distanced, and nobody was yelling at anyone politically, which was a nice change of pace."

Of why she came out this Saturday to cast her vote early, "I'll be working on Election Day, and wouldn't be able to take off for a..."
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Google Excludes Xavier Mission's "Grab and Go" from Community Grants

Through WestView, I wish to thank Xavier Mission at St. Francis Xavier Church on West 16th Street for nutritious "Grab and Go" brown bags distributed every Sunday between 12:40 and 1:30 p.m. The volunteers are tireless and respectful. However, I wish to ask the recipients to be mindful of cleanliness and not to throw banana peels, or even the bananas, on the ground. There are waste cans for that purpose.

Finally, Google Community Grants funding has unfortunately excluded Xavier Mission from its funding sites. Readers, please write to Google and tell this giant tech firm to support Xavier Mission, which is just a few blocks from its building on 8th Avenue.

— Cecilia K. Gallus

Streetwise: The Car / Restaurant / Citibike / Orange Cone Wars

We have a newly heightened conflict in New York City:
Parking spots versus restaurant spaces.
No question that restaurants hold high esteem and critical value in our city, and the West Village is among the greatest showcases of international restaurants in the world.

We have class, we have diverse quality cuisine and we have the wide neighborhood sidewalks to accommodate them in a pandemic. It’s great to see life come back to Greenwich Village and New York with the sidewalk restaurants everywhere... but I have a car...no don’t hate me... and this has become a real Civil War finding a parking spot.

Oh and yes those two other factors—a massive decade-long Citibike takeover of former parking spots and the new explosion of orange cones—implying, but not necessarily actually meaning, work to take place.

How do we deal with all this mess?
Overall it’s a symbol of New York City’s challenge with diversity of transportation versus economic and social survival. And as the pandemic rages into the cold weather and the specter of heated tents on the street becomes real, what then?

I’m not pretending to have an answer—it’s an open question which I would love our politicians and readers to address.

— Bruce Poli

Goodbye Conspiracies!

The September issue of WestView News devoted four full pages, more than any exposure ever printed in WestView, to the promotion of conspiracy theories to explain the destruction of the entire World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. It is eminently clear, however, what led to the collapse of the twin towers and the following fires which consumed Buildings 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and virtually all the buildings standing at the World Trade Center. What caused this fiery calamity was the impact of two hijacked passenger jets. The first jet came from the north and crashed into the top floors of the North Tower, Building One. The second plane, a passenger jet coming from the south laden with enormous amounts of explosive fuel blasted into the South Tower, Building Two, slicing into and exploding against Building One in a fiery double punch. There is no doubt of these facts.

The conspiracy theorists live in a fantasy world in which they ask our readers to embrace their beliefs that government agents secretly planted bombs throughout the World Trade Center precisely timed to explode simultaneously when the two hijacked airliners struck. They ask us to believe that these agents knew just when the hijacking and crashes would take place while they waited patiently by their detonators to kill themselves and the 3000 other human victims. When did WestView become a comic paper? What has happened to the intelligence of its editorial staff?

— Barry Benepe

Will Bleecker Stay Famous?

Dear Editor,
Coming back from Trader Joe’s via Bleecker Street, I noticed several angry announcements on some storefronts blaming the Governor and the Mayor for the permanent closing of their respective stores.
I agree with them. Bleecker Street is famous. But will it stay that way? What with the political situation, I believe that things are only likely to get worse mere days after the upcoming Election. After all, which candidate is more likely to keep big cities, including ours, safe? Will Bleecker Street be boarded up permanently?
Some readers have another or second homes to go to. And then there are the others, including people like myself. Do I sound somewhat concerned?

— John F. Early, Charles Street

Historic Salmagundi Art Club on Fifth Avenue hosts 42nd Annual Open Exhibition November 9-20

Last year’s exhibit included works by WestView News’ Dusty Berke and Karen Rempel. This year’s exhibit again includes work by Karen Rempel in the Park. November 9 – 20, 2020. Hours: Tuesday – Friday 1:00 – 6:00 p.m., Weekends 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. Social distancing measures in place. Photo provided by Salmagundi Club.

Graffiti continued from page 1

What do you do about something like this? So ugly, so huge, so unstoppable?
Well that is one reason why you have a community newspaper—first to show you this outrage, and then to get them to do something about it.

Just around the corner from the 6th Precinct on Bleecker, on the 50 foot mural of a coming restaurant, our full of hate graffiti artists have painted “Shit on God.” They liked it so much they did it again—“Shit on God.”
I have brought this to the attention of our new Police Community Affairs Officer and he stopped for just an instant and returned to smiling trivia.

Go, if you want, to that wall and you will see it—“Shit on God.” If it really offends you spray it over with a can of paint from Garber’s.
Why Am I Running?
BECAUSE OUR CITY NEEDS VISION

By Arthur Schwartz

Our City is a mess!
Our Community is a mess!

WestView readers for the past ten years have read hundreds of articles I have written about problems facing our community and work being done to make our community better. In fact, for 30 years I have been a leader in our community:

• as a parent/neighbor who cleaned up and got City funding for Bleeker Playground, Abingdon Square Park, J.J. Walker Park, Jackson Square Park, Seravalli Playground in the 1990s.
• as a community activist who fought for and helped create Hudson River Park, and Chaired its Community Advisory Council for a dozen years.
• as a lawyer who won a pro-bono case which resulted in a multimillion dollar field being built on Pier 40, and then a Board member of the Little League.
• as a neighbor who organized the West Village Partnership, which worked with the police and social workers to rid West Village parks of drug dealers and homeless encampments in a humane and effective way.
• as the attorney for countless older residents being victimized by their landlords, including one, Ruth Berk, whom I got out of a nursing home, and got myself arrested for protecting her from unlawful surveillance.
• as a Community Board member who chaired the Parks and Waterfront Committee for nearly 20 years and worked with numerous groups to improve Parks throughout the Village and Soho.
• as a litigator who brought suit to compel a new hospital to replace St. Vincent’s, and then again against the closure of Beth Israel Hospital.
• as a lawyer who stopped a COSTCO from being built on 14th Street west of Sixth Avenue.
• as an activist who has fought for smaller classes, for the rights of students with disabilities, and against the encroachment of Charter Schools in our school district.
• as the attorney for a dozen block associations and people with disabilities challenging the 14th Street busway, its elimination of bus stops, and the failure to install elevators in subway stations.

I could go on and on. I have never sat on my hands and I have never feared angering the “powers that be,” even as I sat at their table. I am not someone who just yells loudly and bangs a drum—I am effective.

Our community and our City are in crisis. Our schools are underfunded. It has become too expensive to live here. At the same time, business after business closes. There is a protest citywide about racial injustice that needs to be addressed. Our local public housing is a mess. Our mistreatment of homeless people—shoving them into unused hotels with no social services and allowing them to then flow into local residential communities—needs to be stopped. Our subways and buses are underfunded as fares go up and up. Hospitals continue to merge and close, at a time when we need them more. This is not a time to just go along and not break with the failures of the de Blasio-Corey Johnson Administration.

So—I am running for City Council—father of four, homeowner, busy lawyer, and community activist—to set a new tone in our community and at City Hall.

I hope you will support me.

To learn more, go to www.arthurfornyc.com.

COMPASS

Scotty is a long time current West Village resident and local broker helping clients calmly navigate these challenging times. A loyal contributor to the WestView News since its inception.

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In the Eye of the Beholder?
Graffiti on West Village Buildings

By Brian J Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

Protest street art appeared everywhere during the months of civil rights protests in many cities, when plywood seemed to cover every storefront. We wrote about this recent phenomena and how, although not officially authorized, it typically added to the lively street scene and did not vandalize the building itself. Now that the plywood has been removed, where did all that art go? It doesn’t seem that the artists we’ve talked to got to take it home.

Graffiti has been around, historians say, since ancient times. People make their mark on something that’s not theirs. Modern graffiti is usually in the form of spray paint on buildings or structures, or even trucks and subway cars. It usually involves some danger, climbing up roofs or hanging over walls, usually at night, and certainly some risk of being caught.

What appeals to the street artists to spend their time and money on certain locations, and not others? It would be too glib to guess they are drawn to abandoned or neglected places, as we’ll see from some examples.

Recently, more new graffiti has popped up around the West Village, and it has nothing to do with the protest movement. It is irreverent, colorful, graphic, but is it art, or is it vandalism? That same old question. See for yourself.

In a related note, you may recall the infamous lawsuit filed when developer G&M Realty painted over the street art at its 5Pointz warehouse in 2013, in preparation for a new project construction, without properly giving the artists 90-days’ notice. A U.S. District Court judge had upheld the decision in February 2020, after an appeal was brought by Jerry Wolkoff, the lead developer who died in July 2020. The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision this summer to not hear the U.S. District Court case, means the developer will need to pay $6.7 million to the 45 murals plaintiffs.

With that case settled, will it spur a rush of more graffiti, hoping for protection, or for artists who’ve lost their street art ‘without proper notice’ to file lawsuits? And how will property rights be defended against interlopers?
**Little Island Progress Update**

By Brian J Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

Barry Diller’s “Little Island” aka Pier 55, aka Diller’s Island, is scheduled to open next spring 2021, after 7 years of work. Massive PR efforts are being mounted in the effort to gain community support, after completely shutting out the community from its initial planning, and “back room” deals to circumvent community opposition and environmental laws that prohibit such new construction in the river habitat.

They were able to somehow convince public officials that contributing $40 Million of city funds to build two bridges there, and $50 Million of additional state funds for Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT, a joint NY state and local government entity) capital projects, and still have HRPT pay for the expensive maintenance of the pilings sitting in sea water, would be worth subverting environmental laws for the benefit of a new entertainment venue.

And what a venue it will be: sitting on 132 pile mounted pods of preformed concrete, connected by steel plates and concrete subfloors, some of the pilings will rise almost 70 feet above the water, and the south bridge ducks under the pods to enter the playground area, revealing the ugly underbelly of the pods, probably one of the worst ideas ever thrust upon the river-loving public. The designers may think that smooth concrete “mushrooms” will be clean and attractive to look at from below, but anyone can tell you how quickly the steaks of soot and pollution will stain and degrade the appearance of this 2.7-acre pier. Perhaps by taking the north bridge to enter the park-like atmosphere, one can avoid the underpass depression.

According to their website, half of the piles serve as supports for the ‘tulip pot’ modules that comprise the surface structure of the park, with each pot made up of 4-6 concrete ‘petals,’ all sitting on a central column head. All pot and column head components were fabricated in Greenwich, NY, then driven to Renna, NY, by truck for assembly in fit-up stations, then loaded four at a time onto a barge and floated 130 miles down the Hudson River to Little Island, where each one was erected by a barge-mounted crane onto a concrete pile. Each pot weighs up to 75 tons and no two pots are exactly the same.

Little Island will consist of several undulating edges around a central lawn and play area. Meandering walkways lead off to overlooks, some as high as 65’ above water, to the east, to the south, and to the north. A 700-seat amphitheater along the northwest edge will be reserved for private ticketed events, which will help fund the upkeep of the lush landscaping around the island’s edges. A small stage on the south edge will be for more informal performances. The island will be open to the public, thank you very much, except when special private events are scheduled.

Will that be every weekend, or several nights a week in season? Programming rights are with the Little Island organization, not HRPT.

“It’s entirely my fault that this has become so ambitious,” says Barry Diller, the billionaire funder behind the project ($170M originally, now estimated to be $250M), former head of Paramount Pictures and Fox, now chairman of the internet company IAC, headquartered nearby. The Diller/von Furstenberg family foundation, P55Inc, re-branded its Thomas Heatherwick Studio-designed tourist attraction to kick off its promotions of https://littleisland.org/explore-the-island. Standard Architects serves as the Architect of Record for this project, responsible for overall design coordination. Engineering firm Arup developed the geometries, Hunter Roberts Construction Group is Construction Manager, overseeing all subcontractors and onsite work, with Gardiner & Theobald supporting project management and oversight.

A Community Council has been formed of community members who serve as mentors for “Little Island interns,” leading them on excursions to cultural institutions and meeting with them for professional development luncheons throughout the year. Founding Members of the Community Council are Miguel Acevedo, Fulton

**Police Explain Their Actions to Community Members**

By Frank Quinn

After an eight-month hiatus due to the pandemic, the 6th Precinct Community Council convened a virtual meeting on October 21st. Newly installed Commanding Officer Stephen Spataro and other officers answered a number of written questions submitted by the public, including regarding two recent high-profile incidents.

On Sunday, October 18th a person was shot on the #1 northbound subway platform at Seventh Avenue near 12th Street. The victim walked to the nearby Lenox Health Center for assistance. Captain Spataro reported that a suspect had been identified, the shooting was the result of a dispute, and that both the victim and suspect have criminal histories.

Another question related to an incident on Saturday, September 26th involving people who had gathered on Hudson and West 10th Streets. Viral video of the incident showed police clashing with pedestrians—a loudspeaker can be heard in multiple videos advising pedestrians not to walk in the street or obstruct sidewalks.

All agreed the matter began with an organized gathering in Washington Square Park that included a DJ playing amplified music. Captain Spataro stated that the DJ was told by uniformed city parks officials to cease playing the music after nearby residents complained, and that when the DJ and others would not comply with the requests from the parks officials police were called to disperse the crowd, and that the music equipment was confiscated in the process.

Spataro reported that the group then mobilized and made its way to the 6th precinct where they “verbally stated their intention to take over the precinct and take back the property we had seized from them.” Spataro said police took the threat seriously and secured the precinct, and that some officers said they recognized some in the group from previous encounters. He also said that after repeated warnings (heard on the videos), a decision was made to remove people who were blocking the street.

The incident was widely reported by local media, including witnesses describing the police action as excessive. State Senator Brad Hoylman was quoted in the *New York Times* describing those who had gathered as “peaceful protesters.” Together with assembly member Deborah Glick, Hoylman issued a joint statement: “Last night, bystanders and protesters in our districts in Greenwich Village were charged and pushed to the ground in a disturbing escalation of force by NYPD officers, which was unwarranted and unacceptable.”

In addition to speaking about the incidents having begun as a result of complaints from residents regarding the amplified music, Captain Spataro addressed the justification for the police actions near the precinct, citing the safety concern when people intentionally block an arterial roadway in the immediate vicinity of a police precinct, and “willful” disregard of police instructions to disperse.

There were many questions about issues created by outdoor dining locations and other protests. The officers explained that they work to use discretion regarding intervention, noting competing interests between residents, businesses, and protestors.

To receive email alerts for future 6th Precinct community meetings, send to 6thprecinctcommunitycouncil@gmail.com to be added to the distribution list (for alerts only—does not reply to questions). You can also follow the 6th precinct on Facebook and Twitter.
A Source of Hope During Troubled Times

By Erik Bottcher

2020 will be remembered as a year that delivered a seemingly endless parade of nightmares. There is no shortage of reasons to feel despondent and demoralized. During this most terrible of years, one thing that has given me hope is the life of my Grandmother, Irene Harriet Brimlow. She passed away on October 21st, a month and a half shy of her 104th birthday.

Grandma was born in the Bronx in 1916, two years before another pandemic swept the globe. In her lifetime, she witnessed changes that are truly astounding. She was born twelve years before the discovery of Penicillin. Before Penicillin, a simple cut or a scratch quite often led to death by infection. A century ago, every third child died before they were five years old. Today, the child mortality rate has fallen below 4%.

Some people of her generation traveled West in covered wagons, and returned East in jet powered airplanes. Grandma was born a year before New York State granted women the right to vote and four years before the ratification of the 19th amendment. The prospect of a female president or vice president of the United States would have been inconceivable then. Certainly, the prospect of an African American president would have been inconceivable - something Grandma lived to see.

She and her contemporaries lived through the 1918 pandemic, which killed an estimated 50 million people worldwide. They lived through two World Wars, the Great Depression, unspeakable atrocities around the globe, including the Holocaust, the depths of Jim Crow segregation, and a nuclear arms race that brought us to the brink of annihilation.

In her lifetime, Grandma watched New York City rise, and fall, and rise again. Hope is in short supply these days. It sometimes feels like we’ll never prevail in our struggle for a better world. But my grandmother’s lifetime gives me hope for what is possible in our time.

But progress isn’t inevitable. People fought like hell for the progress that was made in my grandmother’s lifetime. They put their bodies on the line, their lives on the line. That is what we must do.

We need to fight to end poverty. We need to fight to end systemic racism. We need to fight for universal healthcare, universal housing, and universal income. These goals are not impossible. In fact, I believe with all my heart that they are achievable within my lifetime.

I’m writing these words before the November 3 presidential election. Its outcome will have massive consequences for the future of our world. Regardless of its outcome, we must remain hopeful, and keep pushing.

The thing I admire most about Grandma, in addition to her devotion to family, is that she never spoke an ill word about anyone. Positivity and kindness were her trademarks. It’s something I try to emulate in my own life.

Look to older people in your life, and have hope. They have been through more than we have, and they have persevered, as will we.

Erik Bottcher is Chief of Staff to City Council Speaker Corey Johnson and is a candidate for New York City Council, District 3. His website is www.erikbottcher.com.

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NYC needs new leaders with vision and with no fear of making enemies in order to change NY for the better. It needs to get lots better.

Vote for Arthur Schwartz on June 22, 2021 for NY City Council.

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ARTHUR SCHWARTZ
Pursuing Justice 2021

PAID FOR BY ARTHUR FOR OUR COMMUNITY
Neighborhood Cleanup with Candidate Erik Bottcher

By Bob Cooley

Every Sunday at 11:30 a.m. volunteers gather at the NYC AIDS Memorial Park at St. Vincent’s Triangle (Seventh and Greenwich Avenues) to participate in a community cleanup program that provides a way to meet new neighbors while helping to keep our West Village clean.

Led by District 3 council speaker candidate Erik Bottcher, a dozen or more volunteers take on tasks consisting of cleaning up light trash, weeding community flower beds, creating tree beds, and beautifying public spaces all over the Village.

As an example of the small but important changes made to the community by the program, Bottcher provided this account: “There were tree pits that were waste-high in weeds and were filled with trash. And when we were picking the trash out of those weeds, we started pulling the weeds. Then we thought, this is an opportunity to transform this tree bed into a really beautiful greenspace. So we got a whole bunch of volunteers the following Sunday, and we tilled the soil (which was rock hard). We brought compost from Clinton Community Garden and we got plants and we landscaped it. And by the end of that day, we had three beautiful landscaped tree beds where we didn’t have them before. So it’s really the power of community, the power of volunteerism, an example of what one person can do when their efforts are combined with others, to really make a big difference. We have people really finding hope through the program, at a time of despair when you watch the TV and it just makes you want to curl up into a ball and wait for it all to be over. It’s giving people a way of turning their despair into action.”

If you are interested in volunteering or want more information, you can simply show up at the park on the corner of Seventh Avenue and Greenwich Avenue at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, or email Bottcher directly at info@erikbottcher.com.

Bob Cooley is a photojournalist who lives in the West Village. He has spent over 30 years creating photography for the Associated Press, and for LIFE Magazine, Forbes, The Economist, Sports Illustrated, and many other publications. You can see more of Bob’s work at www.bobcooleyphoto.com.
Looking to Ancient Greek Democracy in the 2020 Election Season

By Anastasia Kaliabakos

As November 3rd descends upon the United States, Americans are growing ever more aware of the importance of voting and democracy in our society today. In the spirit of learning about why our elective system functions the way it does, it is worthwhile to understand the intricacies of one of the most famous democratic systems of the ancient world: that of Athens, Greece.

One of the most prominent city states in the Mediterranean, Athens was the motherland and birthplace of a multitude of significant ideologies and ideas. The people of ancient Athens are famous for having encouraged a well-ordered study of subjects such as science, philosophy, history, art, architecture, and literature. They also built countless buildings, temples, monuments, and statues that embodied their concept of beauty.

Athenians were also famous for their institution of a democratic form of government in which some of the people in the city-state were able to share power and control with one another. The word “democracy” stems from the combination of two Greek words meaning “people” and “power.” Literally, the combination of these words means “people power,” which is indicative of what the purpose of a democratic society is. Academics agree that the idea of democratic government is one of the most significant contributions made by the ancient Greeks.

When assembly meetings were held, Athenians would gather in what was known as the “agora,” which was a large open space, in the middle of the city that had a marketplace in addition to government buildings and was included in the design of every major Greek city-state. While gathered in the agora, citizens would discuss current events and issues before the assembly meeting commenced. During the meetings, the citizens were free to express their personal opinions and cast their votes on a variety of decisions. Additionally, the courts were usually located in the agora. The number of jurors in court cases was often very large, sometimes numbering in the hundreds. Essentially, Athenians wanted their juries to reflect the general population, and every citizen was expected to make his own case. Athenian democracy depended heavily on every citizen fulfilling his role: all were expected to vote, had equal rights and powers under the law, and the majority ruled. In a city-state as small as Athens, a pure democracy was actually feasible. As states began to grow in population, elected representatives to make the decisions for the public became more practical; however, the notion that every citizen has a voice important enough to be heard originated in ancient Athens.

It is evident that there are many parallels between our modern democracy in America and that of ancient Athens. We owe the ideology of equal representation under the law to them. However, although our society today is not perfect, it is paramount to recognize the strides we have made as a country regarding democracy. In Athens, every citizen was strictly required to participate in voting or they would suffer punishment, in contrast to our own country where citizens can choose whether or not they wish to vote. Additionally, it is important to note that not everyone in Athens was considered a “citizen.” Only free adult men were fortunate enough to enjoy citizenship—about 20 percent of the total population. Women could not vote or have any say at all in the “democratic” political process. Additionally, slaves and foreigners were not citizens and could not participate in democracy.

It is valuable to learn about the history of the system of democracy and why it has survived for millennia; however, it is also important to understand its drawbacks and how we have advanced as human beings and Americans. We live in a world that is more inclusive and equal than ancient Athenians ever could have imagined.

This November, it is extremely important to exercise the rights this country has achieved for all its citizens. Keeping in mind the countless sacrifices that so many people from ancient Greece to modern-day America have made in order for us to possess the privileges we have, make sure to fulfill your civic duty and vote this November.

Anastasia Kaliabakos is a graduate of the Brearley School and is currently a Presidential Scholar at the College of the Holy Cross majoring in classics. She is a features editor for Holy Cross newspaper, The Spire, an associate editor and member of the editorial board of Parnassus: Classical Journal, author of Milkshake: A Very Special Pony, and recipient of the 2019 NYC Scholastic Writing Award. Anastasia has contributed to WestView News since 2019.

“Time is on the Side of Change”—RBG

By Penny Mintz

With the COVID pandemic still raging, the need for universal health care has become obvious. Your COVID illness is, after all, a threat to me and to everyone else. No one would go without treatment if the federal government were to enact Medicare for All, but that probably won’t happen in my lifetime. Fortunately, we have a potential solution here in New York in the form of the NY Health Act.

When enacted, the Health Act will provide single-payer, universal health care—without premiums, co-pays, deductibles, or limited provider networks—to all New Yorkers and all people who work in the state and their families. It will also provide fair compensation to hospitals so that a good part of the economic incentive to shutter hospitals will cease to exist.

There is a cost, of course, but that cost is less than what we cumulatively spend on premiums, co-pays, deductibles, or processing insurance claims, and the massive profits siphoned off by insurance companies, pharmaceutical companies, and medical-device companies. According to the Rand Corporation, a conservative think tank, the total savings for New York State will be $10 billion a year. According to economists at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, the savings will be $45 billion a year.

The NY Health Act has passed in the State Assembly every year for the past five years and is one vote short of passage in the State Senate. Since all of us have been consumed with COVID and with the election, the Act has gotten little attention these last nine months. Nevertheless, people have never stopped working for its passage. Among them are the members of Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP), a non-profit organization of 20,000 physicians and other New York health professionals.

According to Marc Lavietes, secretary of the metro New York chapter, PNHP has orchestrated a letter-writing campaign to elected officials. They are signing on local businesses, which would be relieved of dealing with the ever-rising costs and complexities of private insurance. Most significantly, PNHP is making “a huge statewide effort to get that extra State Senate vote,” says Lavietes.

Our local State Senators, Brad Hoylman and Brian Kavanagh, have signed on as co-sponsors of the Act. But neither of them is pressing for passage. They could conduct town hall meetings on the subject, but they haven’t. They could appear at the many demonstrations and meetings that have been hosted by support groups. Hoylman appeared at one demonstration. They could use social media to promote passage of the act.

Gustavo Rivera, chair of the Senate Health Committee, has 49 Facebook posts on the subject. Hoylman has two and Kavanagh has none. I found 20 Health Act tweets in the Rivera account. Hoylman has one and Kavanagh has none.

Most disturbingly, Progressive Action of Lower Manhattan and PNHP have been trying to meet with Brian Kavanagh to discuss the need for his active participation in efforts to pass the NY Health Act. PALM members have been trying unsuccessfully for two years. PNHP has been working on it for the last several months.

We need our elected officials to be responsive to their constituents. We need them to publicly and repeatedly press for passage of the NY Health Act. We need the Health Act to pass. Then we would get to the next step in the process: worrying about whether Governor Cuomo would continue to support insurance, big pharma, and big hospital interests over the needs of the people of the State of New York.

We need this to change.
The First Man Cured of AIDS Has Died of Cancer

By Kambiz Shekdar, Ph.D.

Timothy Ray Brown was reported as the first person cured of AIDS. His case provided clinical proof that AIDS can indeed be cured and gives people living with HIV/AIDS hope. For many researchers like myself, Timothy sparked our imaginations in our search for a global cure.

The first time I met Timothy was for dinner at Lusardi’s restaurant on the Upper East Side. He had just flown in hours earlier as one of the two special guests at a symposium we had co-organized. He was very anxious about his trip proceeding smoothly. He was not familiar with New York City, and a prior trip did not go well. He had to take care because of his delicate health. He was so anxious that I became anxious too. After all, Timothy was no ordinary man. In the fight against AIDS, Timothy was our messiah.

Thankfully, Timothy’s trip was problem-free and he arrived to dinner unscathed and unharmed. We were led to our table in a corner of the back dining room of the Italian restaurant. This was at a time in the New York City before social-distancing. There were few fine-dining establishments where you had enough space and distance from fellow diners that you could listen to each other talk and hear what was said. Lusardi’s was one of these places and I wanted to hear every word Timothy had to say.

Before our bodies even fell fully into our seats, Timothy began to apologize. He was quite nervous and worried as he spoke, more anxious than he had been about his trip. He had a stalker of sorts, he said. He feared his stalker might have heard about our symposium and reached out perhaps. He was worried that his stalker had been disruptive.

When Timothy’s case was first reported in 2007, he was only referred to anonymously, as the “Berlin Patient.” Berlin is where this American man was cured. But Timothy did not want to be anonymous; he wanted to give hope to everyone. Everyone. To all those who wanted to get a glimpse of him—to the many incredulous people who wanted to meet him, greet him, touch him, shake his hand, hold him and hug him, share their stories with him, cry with him, and even to those who proved to want to stalk him.

Timothy was the right person, at the right time, and at the right place to be cured of AIDS. He allowed his body to be used like a laboratory where he was a partner in curing AIDS along with his physician, Dr. Gero Hutter, who assembled the many disparate elements, each of which became known to all but none of which were synthesized into a coherent cure by anyone before. Timothy gave his body, his blood and tissue samples, his person, personal space, and his voice to cure AIDS.

For the entire rest of our first evening together, Timothy spoke about how he was infected, how he was cured, and how he determined to help researchers advance science such that more broadly available forms of the stem cell therapy that cured him could be made available to all those who would want it. Timothy’s dream was that he would not be the only person on earth cured of AIDS. This dream came true when the “London Patient” was reported as the second person cured of AIDS in 2019.

Timothy’s vision goes beyond a cure for one person in whatever city he or she may be named after that is where they were cured. For Timothy, and for researchers like myself, these initial successes are just the beginning. Timothy’s vision gave us back our own vision: a future free from AIDS.
The COVID 2020 Election

By Roger Paradiso

There will be a reckoning on November 3rd in the Village. As we approach that date mom-and-pop shops in the neighborhood are waiting for a solution to the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and political repercussions of many decades of gentrification. These tectonic shifts have destroyed much of the bohemian tradition of Greenwich Village.

Governor Cuomo has extended the commercial rent moratorium until December 31, 2020. It is his intention to extend this moratorium until the disease has been eradicated.

Meanwhile, on Oct. 9, the administration of President Donald Trump announced policy guidance that property owners are free to start the eviction process while the federal moratorium is active. It also stipulated that landlords are not mandated to make tenants aware that the eviction ban exists (Reuters, MSN News).

Nick owns three historic theaters. The gem of these movie theaters is the historic Cinema Village, which is the longest continuously running "art theater" screening independent films in Manhattan. Located at 22 East 12th Street, Cinema Village opened in 1964. Greenwich Village was the epicenter of the counter culture back then. If you wanted to be a film director, an actress, a dancer, or any kind of artist you came to the Village. Now that world is gone due to the high rents.

Nevertheless, Nick says, "I will never sell my theaters. I have sold my house, but never the theaters. I have been working on getting the theaters ready for opening. I have put in new ventilation systems to keep the air moving up to the ceiling where the vents are. I don't know what else I can do. All the bathrooms are renovated to keep the air clean. The city won't give any breaks to us on the real estate taxes, so I am paying a lot of money in the hopes of keeping my theaters ready to open. I need some cash flow, or I have to get another loan."

Cinema Village represented the bohemian face of the Village. Back then content dictated the form—in other words, it didn't matter if the theater was fancy if the work presented there was riveting. Nick says the theater will be here for a long time.

While New York State and the City of New York are broke, the Village looks to Congress to pass another stimulus relief bill. As of October 28th Mitch McConnell called for a recess until November 9th, which is an insult to those who need relief. It is a callous move that seems to say let's just stay here and wait until November 9th.

We are in a quandary. Right now, an answer is not forthcoming. The scientists tell us the virus will be with us for a while. The danger is particularly acute in the winter when colder weather pushes people indoors (Reuters/MSN News).

It is a callous move that seems to say let's just stay here and wait until November 9th. It is a callous move that seems to say let's just stay here and wait until November 9th. We fear that without a federal aid package soon, the NYC dining landscape will be irreparably harmed for the foreseeable future," says Vittorio of La Lanterna di Vittorio Café on MacDougall Street.

As outdoor dining is dominating the landscape, we cannot forget that the Village experience was always the arts and a night of dining, small coffee shops, and great bars—some with hip music, like the Bitter End and the Village Vanguard.

Vittorio is concerned: "We are limping by here. The ability to close the street and provide an outdoor dining option has certainly been a great help in allowing us to keep our doors open and some staff members employed. Our biggest concern is that now, with winter coming and indoor dining capped at 50 percent at best, will we be able to make it though to next spring? They haven't made an outdoor heater that can withstand a NYC winter. And if there was one, the cost to run it would be prohibitive. No, the only thing to do, metaphorically speaking, is hunker down for a long winter."

Health experts say evictions may contribute to a second-wave COVID-19 crisis as the newly homeless are forced into shelters or tight quarters with friends and relatives, potentially exposing them to infection. The danger is particularly acute in the winter when colder weather pushes people indoors (Reuters/MSN News).

Another thing the Village was always known for was great bookstores and record stores. One that is on life support is Village Music World on Bleecker Street. The owner, Jamal, has been trying to get an SBA loan for many months. His landlord tried to help him with the loan but gave up in frustration. Jamal said he is "still waiting for help not here yet, as promised, and most of businesses around me are the same…the lack of SBA answers…same answer every single time, with no resolution you have to wait. It's in process for the last six months, but no other answer. I've been waiting, just wondering how come I have to wait this long. Other businesses didn't. Is this just a lottery ticket? Is this the way our government is run?"

These are the curve balls that small business owners must think about as we struggle between the uber-gentrification of the digital age and the lost business of the pandemic. The rents are too high, and business is too slow.

Jamal writes back in an email, "a little improvement on foot traffic, but still not fully feels like it's even close to normal. January is going to be a mess."

We are in a quandary. Right now, an answer is not forthcoming. The scientists tell us the virus will be with us for a while. Maybe the Covid 2020 Election will provide some relief to a Village that's looking for answers.
Greenwich Village Legends
Richard Feynman: Physicist, Raconteur, Musician, Humorist

There’s Albert Einstein, there’s Stephen Hawking, there’s Isaac Newton. And then there’s Richard Feynman...winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics, 1965, and one of the most celebrated creative figures in all of science. His February 15, 1988 New York Times obituary proclaimed: “Richard P. Feynman, arguably the most brilliant, iconoclastic and influential of the postwar generation of theoretical physicists, died Monday night in Los Angeles of abdominal cancer. He was 69 years old.”

“He was the most original mind of his generation...a genius and a magician,” said Freeman Dyson of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ.

A world-renowned physicist who developed highly advanced equations as basic principles of quantum physics (electrodynamics), Richard Feynman was an innovative and humorous teacher, and a scientific and mathematical leader renowned for discovering (as a member of the Rogers Commission) that the rubber seal that enclosed the O-ring failed to expand in a cold environment (below 32 degrees)—which caused the Challenger Space Shuttle explosion that stunned the country on January 28, 1986.

My mother double-dated with Feynman and his future wife Arline Greenbaum at MIT in 1939. Her “beau” was Feynman's roommate Peter Bernays (who happened to be Sigmund Freud’s great nephew).

When Feynman’s wife Arlene died of cancer at a young age, it was a devastating blow to him. Despite the tragedy, he married twice more, had two children, and went on to create a world of physics that no one had discovered before. His 1942 master's thesis The Principle of Least Action in Quantum Mechanics, under the guidance of John Archibald Wheeler, has become as nearly as significant as Einstein’s theory of general relativity and e=mc2.

I hadn’t known Feynman had a connection with the West Village until Tim Jambeck, our WestView distribution director, mentioned that he had had a wonderful experience taking his class at the New School in 1986. “He was so much fun, he would run around the room demonstrating the principles of physical life,” Tim recalled.

In 1938 Feynman submitted a series of diagrams to the Physical Review that helped a general audience understand quantum electrodynamics. That was when he was at MIT; subsequently, he taught at Princeton and Cal Tech.

Later in his life, in line with his legendary humorous character, Feynman famously participated in concert tours with the much-admired Tuvan Throat Singers of Mongolia, playing bongos to accompany their oral gymnastics. His collection of reminiscences, Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!, helps define his place as a true Greenwich Villager (visiting professor), among so many of whom we can claim as our neighborhood’s inspirational provenance. The book, released in 1985, covers a variety of events and circumstances in his life.

The anecdotes, based on recorded conversations he had with his close friend and drumming partner Ralph Leighton, reflect the mind of a genius in its most comfortable elements—friendship and ideas.

Richard Feynman. Another great contributor to American life and culture who taught in the West Village! Our history is the stuff of legends.

Richard Feynman, Greenwich Village legend and world-class lecturer, 1986.

By Bruce Poli

This is a new monthly column highlighting the giants of American culture who have lived or worked in Greenwich Village.

Greenwich Village Tours

Enjoy the great legends, stories, sights and history of the renowned New York neighborhood which has helped shape our American culture.

See the Village homes of Woody Guthrie, Sinclair Lewis, Edie Windsor, Emma Lazarus, Benenice Abbott, Thomas Paine.

Hear the theatre and music history of Edward Albee, Eugene O'Neill, Bob Dylan, John Belushi, James Baldwin, Bette Midler, Allen Ginsberg, John Lennon and Yoko Ono and so many more.

See the sights and hear the stories of Chumley’s, Magnolia Bakery, Sex and the City, Provincetown Playhouse, Cherry Lane Theatre and more.

A percentage of ticket sales will go to WestView News.

2 hours

for info: brucepoli2@gmail.com • 917 450-3323

Above, left to right: Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Dustin Hoffman (Photos by Fred W. McDarrah)
What struck me most this month was all the construction going on around outdoor dining. Now that outdoor dining will continue year-round, restaurants are scrambling to make their outdoor seating warmer and more sheltered. Heat lamps, new legal, are everywhere. Some of the structures still look makeshift, but others are quite sophisticated, such as the ones at Boucherie and Don Angie. And a number of amusing looking plastic bubbles have popped up on 7th Avenue. It remains to be seen whether this will be enough to entice people to eat outdoors when the colder weather arrives.

**Pop-up/Closed/Open (all in one!)**

**NICE DAY CHINESE TAKEOUT**
**190 Sullivan Street at Bleeker Street**

In July, 2018, when Junzi Kitchen was just about to open their third location, I spoke to the owners about the restaurant, which had been conceived at the Yale Entrepreneurial Institute by a number of Yale students. Their first location, which opened in 2015, was in New Haven, and in 2017 they opened a second location near Columbia University. Junzi Kitchen is a Chinese fast-casual restaurant (think Chinese Chipotle), but Yong Zhao, one of the owners, was determined to serve authentic Northern Chinese food that was different from the Chinese food Americans were familiar with. Junzi did well and even opened a fourth location in the Bryant Park area, and a “ghost kitchen” called Zuul in Soho for delivery orders in lower Manhattan. It was not as well received as the other locations, so a decision was made to convert from a pop-up called Nice Day Chinese Takeout there.

Junzi’s chef is Lucas Sin, a talented 27-year old who was a Yale undergraduate when work started on Junzi. Lucas, who was originally from Hong Kong, had been cooking elaborate meals in his dorm room all through college. He had a fine dining pedigree as well, as he spent all his school vacations working in restaurants, some Michelin-starred, in the US and abroad. He has embraced the idea of a restaurant serving Chinese-American food, and has explained that it is just as valid a form of Chinese food as what is viewed as more authentic Chinese food. He loved the idea of serving all the takeout classics, like General Tso’s Chicken, Spring Rolls, Lo Mein, Fried Rice and more, but also wanted to optimize the recipes to make them taste even better. And after tasting some of them, I can say they are better. The Shake Shake Shrimp comes with the sauce on the side so that it stays crispy while in transit. I had it with the General Tso’s sauce (there are three options) which was less sweet and spicier than the usual incarnation. The beef used in the dishes is hangar steak, a less expensive cut, but very tender and flavorful when prepared correctly (and this one was). There are many more dishes like dumplings and Black Pepper Beef that I am excited to try (my favorite version of Black Pepper Beef was from Sung Chu Mei on Hudson Street which closed in 2008 but which I still miss.).

Nice Day has been doing well, with positive reviews and return customers, so a decision was made to convert from a pop-up to a permanent fixture. The ghost kitchen in Soho will reopen soon to deliver Junzi selections to lower Manhattan now that the Sullivan Street location has a different menu. And the company has been able to rehire about 16% of their employees, and are looking to add more, although some of them have since left the city.

Yong explained that Junzi and Nice Day are two answers to the same question: “What is the future of Chinese food in America?” While the accelerated disappearance of Chinese restaurants during the pandemic is causing people to mourn the loss of their favorite spots (in the Village the recent disappearance of Sammy’s Noodle Shop hit many hard), we are lucky to have Nice Day as a fresh new option.

**Open**
**THE LAVAUX SWISS WINE & FONDUE BAR**
**630 Hudson Street between Jane and Horatio Streets**

This attractive and unusual spot was planning an early 2020 opening, but the pandemic delayed things. Finally, though, they opened on October 16th for indoor and terrace dining. The owners are Swiss and also have a vineyard in the Lavaux region of Switzerland, and their goal is to introduce New Yorkers to Swiss wines and cheese. The menu consists of cheese boards and charcuterie boards (and combination boards), as well as fondues and a few open-faced sandwiches. Most Americans are not familiar with Swiss wines, as very little is exported to the US. Last summer, on a trip to Switzerland, I greatly enjoyed learning about such wines as Chasselas, the most widely planted native grape in Switzerland, as well as others, and I look forward to getting reacquainted.

**Closed/Closing**

I was sad to see a sign on the door at Flip Sigi (525 Hudson Street between West 10th and Charles Streets) announce that it would be closing: “It is with a heavy heart that we have decided to make Wednesday, Nov 25th our last day at 525 Hudson St. Please come by and get your Flip Sigi while we are still here. With the proposed rent increases, our inability to adhere to the CDC guidelines in our tiny space and the looming cold winter months ahead, we simply don’t see a path forward.” When the restaurant re-opened for outdoor dining, they had a cheerful set-up complete with music. Flip Sigi opened in May 2016 and was originally called 2nd City. It was started by reality-TV chef Jordan Andino who had hoped to popularize Filipino cuisine by introducing Filipino food preparations into familiar dishes like tacos, burritos and grain bowls. A second location was open for a few years on the Upper East Side but it closed over a year ago.

**Other**

La Newyorkina (240 Sullivan Street near West 3rd Street) which is known for its excellent paletas (Mexican ice pops) and other Mexican sweets now also offers savory options for on-line ordering, such as tamales, empanadas and taquitas. Fany Gerson, the founder, grew up in Mexico and attended culinary school there and at the Culinary Institute in Hyde Park, New York. She was also a partner in Dough, the donut chainlet, but after splitting with her partners, she recently opened Fan Fan Doughnuts in Bed-Stuy. While the donuts are not currently available at La Newyorkina, they may be in the future.

We love to hear from you, and you’ve been a great help! We would miss us much were it not for you. Please keep up the good work and email us your observations at wvnewsinout@gmail.com
A View from the Kitchen

By Isa Covo

And so it goes, day after day, the coronavirus cases increase, the deaths mount, people grieve, workers lose their jobs, the food pantries have never been so busy, proud people feel embarrassed for not being able to feed their families, and our President tells us that things would get worse if we change administration. How is that? Is it the unfounded fear that guns will become illegal? The belief that factories will close, and other improbable things? What we need is a clear-eyed, concrete plan to turn things around, and so far, there is nothing showing on the horizon.

I am lucky; I am comfortable at home. From my windows I can enjoy the magical transformation of the trees from a uniform green to an explosion of colors, the changing light of the day and at night the lights bring mystery to the cityscape.

But I am alone; I eat alone. I rarely see my family, and at a distance. My young grandchildren are changing but few are the occasions where I have a chance to witness the change, hear their stories, play with them. As for the adult one embarking in a new life, our exchanges are by telephone. A disembodied, albeit warm, voice. All our members miss what is a family, the closeness of it.

There is a bonus in this story though. It has been the first time that I can remember that we were able to have a peek on TV at the interiors, however limited, of the personalities, commentators, journalists, commenting on our current situation.

About you, how are you doing?

I wonder if the life we are experiencing now, where few are spared, will make us better, more humane, more united, more caring. Be positive, have hope that the best is yet to come. VOTE.

Minestrone Milanese

Although not eliminated, tomatoes are not as frequently used in Northern Italy as they are in the Southern part. So here is a tomato-less minestrone, which is also pasta-less.

INGREDIENTS
1 sweet onion, chopped
2 leeks, sliced
3 carrots, sliced
2 cups celery, sliced
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
3/4 cup, about 6 ounces, cranberry beans, soaked overnight
4 cloves of garlic, minced
5-6 cups vegetable broth
1 large baking potato, peeled but left whole
1/3 cup short-grained rice, well rinsed
2 cup spinach coarsely chopped
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/8 teaspoon grated nutmeg
Salt and pepper to taste
1 teaspoon chopped sage
2 tablespoons chopped parsley
Grated Padano cheese

1. Chop the onion, Slice the other vegetables into half-inch slices.
2. In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan heat the oil over medium heat, and add the onion, leeks, carrots and celery. Cook, stirring about five minutes until the vegetables become fragrant.
3. Add the beans and stir to coat with the oil. Add the garlic and the broth. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower the heat to medium low, cover the pan and simmer for about fifty minutes.
4. Add the whole potato, and continue cooking for ten minutes, then add the spinach, cabbage, and rice to the bean mixture. Stir in the butter and the seasonings. Cover and simmer for another fifteen minutes.
5. Add the chopped herbs and simmer another five minutes, making sure that the beans and the potato are soft. If necessary, simmer another ten minutes or so until the desired softness. The beans should be soft but not mushy or falling apart. Before serving, cut up the potato with a spoon into irregular coarse pieces.

Serve the cheese on the side to be sprinkled on each serving to taste. Yield: 6 to 8 servings

Note: If you wish, you may replace the spinach with other greens, such as kale or Swiss chard, but the cooking times may vary.

Minestrone Milanese

Photo by Isa Covo.
Notes From Away
Update and Reality Check
By Tom Lamia

In September I wrote of Gender Politics as shorthand to describe the Maine U.S. Senate race between Susan Collins and Sara Gideon. I spoke of Collins’ long and respected service in the Senate and of Gideon’s relatively short political history (and residence) in Maine. Despite these positive indications for Collins’ re-election, I noted that Gideon was ahead in the race and that the wind was at her back. I noted Collins’ deep roots in Maine and its Republican Party, advantages that could yet give her a win.

An update on this race is needed. There continues to be an unprecedented amount of money in this race. The money is coming in from outside the state for both candidates. The winner in the race will be the winning candidate, of course, but the candidates’ parties also have a lot at stake. Collins win would be a material addition to Republican prospects for maintaining its Senate majority and continuing Mitch McConnell’s often-abused power to control Senate procedure. It is the power that goes with this prize that accounts for the money bonanza that is going into television ads. Those ads are overwhelmingly negative. This is the standard practice among candidates today as political consultants have found negative ads to be highly effective.

Maine is a small state in population (1.3 million), most of which is clustered along its Atlantic coast. The remainder is spread widely in a grand sweep of geography extending to the Canadian border. Maine has only two congressional districts. The First District covers the southern coastal region and has a Democratic representative. The Second District takes in the western and northern parts of the state. It, too, has a Democratic representative at the moment, but has been historically a Republican district. Susan Collins is from Caribou, a small city in the Second District. Sara Gideon lives in the First District. These differences play their parts in the Senate race.

There are racial and ethnic considerations, but these are far down the list of voting blocs that would justify massive campaign spending by either party. There was a time (1972) when a candidate from Maine could be irrevocably smeared by evidence that he had used the word “Canuck” to refer to fellow Mainers, or some part of them. That candidate was Edmund Muskie and the “evidence” was a fake interview provided by a dirty trickster. Today it is television ads that seem to be absorbing this out of state money. Those ads are being run by both candidates in prime time in such quantity that one often sees a Collins ad, followed by a Gideon ad, followed by another Collins ad, followed by yet another Gideon ad. All negative. The candidates don’t seem to like it (they complain about the ads when they are interviewed on public radio, making it plain that they have been hurt by them and are uncomfortable with them), but they continue.

Now, an update: after a month or so of Gideon’s lead holding or increasing, Collins is creeping up in the polls. Former Republican Senator William Cohen, who served as shorthand to describe the Maine U.S. Senate race between Susan Collins and Sara Gideon, has endorsed Collins. So have former President George W. Bush, current Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker and former Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman. Despite her vote to confirm Brett Kavanaughs as a Supreme Court Justice and her failure to be critical of President Trump on some of his most controversial statements and actions, moderate Republicans who are Trump critics support Collins. This is in line with my September conclusion that Collins “may still win, because her Republican roots are solid and broad.”

Gideon is not going away. She has the support of the national Democratic Party and access to its fund-raising channels. She also has the respect of Maine Democrats who have seen Gideon’s skills as a negotiator and organizer in her brief time as Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives. She has defended herself effectively against Collins’ attacks and, this week, scored a major endorsement from the Portland Press Herald, which made the essential point that Maine needed a change in Senate control in order to get its issues voted on, approved and signed into law.

Now, a “reality check.” There is a lot of hand wringing and dire predictions of the death of a great American city. New York is not going out of business; it is not even grievously damaged. It has lost buildings occupants, business and residential, and it has seen a few major losses in core industries, among which are several that are woven into the fabric of the West Village. I speak of entertainment sectors that are closed to live audiences, tourism in general that was swept away by fear of travel and crowds, high end gatherings of several types where New York was always the first choice as a venue for style, international impact, capacity, elegance and convenience.

All of those will come back, better and undiminished. The excitement of this city has never left it in former dark times; not in the ‘80s when prospects for recovery from the financial crisis were bleak and required a municipal and regional financial reorganization for recovery. Not in the aftermath of 9/11 and the loss of 3,000 lives, and not in the ‘60s and ‘70s when crime was endemic in the city, to the point of its having an image of lawlessness and personal physical risk on its streets.

How do I know this and why do I say it? Because we humans are, above all, social animals that seek the center of the cultural storm where we can have a hand in making it improve, saving it, and enjoying the result. From J.P. Morgan and Jacob Schiff, from Willa Cather and Theodore Dreiser, from Donald Trump and Mike Bloomberg, from Mario Cuomo to Rudy Giuliani, there has been here in New York a chemistry that excites and builds through the ability to close together and talk about what works and what doesn’t and to make one’s mark. It’s all in those Sinatra songs and it’s not going away.

Fond Memories of Greenwich Village
By Susan Schwartzman

As a young girl in my tweens, my mother took me to visit my great aunt, who lived in a tiny, cluttered studio on Bleecker Street. I had never been to Greenwich Village before. I was dazzled by all the shops and publishing professionals but it was unaffordable on a publishing salary. I was away from the office for a good two weeks. I joined the procession out of the theater, and my lunch hour. But traveling to West 4th Street, from Midtown took at least 30 minutes each way, and with my therapy session, I was away from the office for a good two hours. But that was back in the day when it was not unusual for publishing professionals to take two-hour lunches. No one noticed my disappearance as publishing offices were as empty of life during lunchtimes as the Sahara desert.

If I arrived early enough to West 4th Street, I would stop at Murray’s and buy some cheese or a delicious sandwich, and eat it at a nearby park, people watching before my session. More than ten years later after those therapy sessions in the Village, I met a boyfriend for a second date at a small movie theater in the West Village to see a highly-praised movie, Pola X, which was adapted from a Herman Melville novel, Pierre, or: The Ambiguities. As an English Lit major, it was required reading, but I neither remembered the story nor read it, and the movie did not shed any light on the novel. Unfortunately the film did not live up to its review. In fact, halfway through the movie, the audience started booing as they walked out. Gilbert, my date, and I joined the procession out of the theater, and headed to a nearby restaurant.

After dinner, Gilbert walked me to my Honda Civic hatchback, and I drove home around 11:00 PM on the deserted West Side highway, and made it back to my Yonkers apartment in 20 minutes.

That date led to many others and eventually to a marriage proposal. But Gilbert never again trusted my choices in movies. He and I now live in a rural town in upstate New York. I don’t miss the city. When I worked in book publishing, I wanted to live in Manhattan, but it was unaffordable on a publishing salary, and I had always dreamed of living in the country, surrounded by farms and mountains. But as I write this piece looking out my window at the brilliant red maples and golden elms that look like a Cezanne painting, I have a yearning for those youthful, carefree days of walking down Bleecker Street, with not a care in the world but finding the perfect peasant blouse and memorable meal.

Susan Schwartzman is an independent book publicist who just completed a memoir, DISINHERITED: A Daughter’s Story of Loss, Betrayal and Forgiveness. For more information, please visit www.susan-schwartzmanpublicity.com
The Legend Of Holly Claus
A DEAR SANTA LETTER FROM 1872 THAT CHANGED CHRISTMAS FOREVER

One starry night, she whispered her wish on a balmy wind to the faraway, bustling city of New York, 1872, where children were busy writing their wishes to Father Christmas.

A boy named Christopher, alone in a sliver of an apartment near the top of a once-grand house, was wholly absorbed in the smooth wood in his hands, whistling a wolf puppet. On the table in front of him rested a carved fox, owl, and baby penguin.

The door opened, and his mother stepped in quietly, holding a folded paper. Her shoulders were hunched against the cold, but her enormous gray eyes held the remnants of great beauty. When Christopher looked up, he saw tears glistening on her face.

“What’s happened, Mama?” he asked anxiously. “What is it?”

His mother shook her head. “Your letter, love. It’s your letter that makes me cry, but they aren’t sad tears.”

“The letter? But didn’t you tell me that all children write a letter to Santa Claus at Christmas?” asked Christopher. “Why would it make you cry?”

His mother dropped to her knees and looked searchingly in his eyes. “Tell me what you see in this room,” she said.

Christopher looked around the threadbare sitting room. Although their toes were often chilled and they slept on an old tattered mattress that dipped in the center, he saw a perfect world. “A wooden table. A lamp, with a beautiful glass. My books. Lots of books.” He smiled. “You.”

“And it’s enough, darling?” asked his mother in a whisper.

For centuries, Wish had searched for a child who would be moved to write a very special letter, a letter that would change the world.

Wish, a peculiar fairy, sat idly by the window watching the snow fall softly over the Land of Wishes. “Soon,” she thought with delight, “it will be time for me to gather up all the Christmas letters written with the hope and innocence that only children possess and deliver them to Nicholas, the King of Forever.” The letters will hold the Christmas wishes from the hearts of all children. All of these letters are archived, cherished, and kept safely in the Land of Wishes.
“Enough? I don’t understand,” he answered slowly.

“This is home. This is where you are. It’s more than enough.”

Wish was attuned to all the children’s letters. She knew that this was a letter like no other. That night, she flitted into the apartment unnoticed and whisked it away.

The young boy in the Empire City couldn’t possibly foresee that the letter he had written from a wellspring of innocence would inspire, in the Kingdom of Forever, the greatest gift ever given or received.

In the Royal Palace of Forever, King Nicholas’s study was awash in letters. They were strewn over the thick rugs, piled in towering stacks on the massive desk, and heaped on the chairs. Nicholas, burrowed in his armchair, read letter after letter. Many of them made him smile; a few made him laugh out loud; but each one was precious to him, for it told him the story of a child he knew and loved. While he read, Viviana gathered up envelopes and retrieved letters from odd corners, and a rugged white wolf drowsed in front of the fire.

Wish fluttered in through the window, eager to get Nicholas’s attention. She tried shouting in his royal ear and dancing on his royal desk, until Viviana plucked the letter from her hand.

“Nicholas, you must read this one,” she told her husband.

He unfolded the letter. Viviana watched his face intently and saw something she had not seen in centuries: her husband’s tears. He turned to her with an expression of wonder and silently held up the thin sheet of paper.

Dear Santa,
What do you wish for?
You always answer children’s wishes, but what about your own? Isn’t there one thing in the world that you wish for but do not have?
If you post a letter back to me, I will do all I can to bring your dream to life.

Love, your friend,
Christopher W.C.


“No one—” He cleared his throat. “No one has ever asked me what I wish for.”

What would the King wish for?
The white wolf, Tundra, raised his head from the rug. “Is there something you wish for, sire?”

His voice echoed through the kingdom. A hush fell on every street. From the cobbler cobbling shoes, to the dressmakers hand-stitching diaphanous gowns, to the tinker bells tuning bells on sleighs, to the silversmiths forging ice skates, to the fairies visiting the tailor for repairs to their wings; everyone wondered,

“Sometimes...” said Nicholas slowly, his thoughts reaching back into lost time. “Sometimes I wish...” Like a great, golden wave of sunshine, a wish burst upon him. Entwining his hand with Viviana’s, he looked across the cozy room to the snow-covered world outside. Astonishing, astonishing that this flimsy piece of paper had the power to change the Kingdom of Forever.

The rest of the kingdom was left to wonder, until one day, miraculously, the wish came true. On a blessed autumn morning, King Nicholas and Queen Viviana stepped onto the palace balcony and presented their child, the first ever born in the Kingdom of Forever. They named her Princess Holly, and, as her father granted the wishes of children, she would become the guardian of their dreams.

But how? Find out in the December issue of WestView News how a little boy’s letter and a young girl’s dream changed everything.

This Christmas, in the spirit of generosity and giving, write a letter to Santa that gives your wish away. What do you wish for someone else?

The Julie Andrews Collection
Story by Britney Ryan
Illustrations by Laurel Long

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Abortion Rites and Abortion Rights

By Donna Schaper

Father James Martin, a liberal Jesuit priest, closed the Democratic convention with a prayer in which he asked God to “Open our hearts to those most in need.” On his list was “the unborn child in the womb.” Cardinal Timothy Dolan opened the Republican convention praying for many things, including “the innocent life of the baby in the womb.” Neither really understands how little their words matter to most people.

Religion has been dying a slow death, not even hidden in plain sight. The churches close; the weeds grow up in the parking lots; the people languish. Not even hospice is offered. People just turn away.

Your pastor is probably the last person you’re going to tell about your problem pregnancy or your drug addiction or your extramarital affair. Why? Formal spiritual advisors are widely ridiculed as judgmental fools. Holier than thou is our middle name. This stereotype may not always be true, but it is true often enough to keep people from telling us their secrets. When Father Martin and Cardinal Dolan judge women according to the circumstances of their wombs as part of public rites, even more people vote with their feet about religion than before. An unwanted pregnancy is not a sin, but you wouldn’t know that from public prayers.

When it comes to the languishing of our spirits, we need to be very careful of the biprothic and trust the amateurs. We need to listen to the people hearing the prayers, not the people speaking them. More so, we need to become self-care experts. The golden rule really matters: love your neighbor as you love yourself. Your neighbor is yourself. You believe that abortion should be legal in all cases. A 2019 NPR-PBS Marist Poll found that 77 percent of respondents think the Supreme Court should uphold Roe v. Wade. So, who are these famous and important Catholics praying to or for? It is certainly not the majority. How dare they take up the sacred space for public prayer with put-downs and judgements against women? I have to respect their willingness to buck trends. But that is far as I can go.

Religious leaders, when asked to speak or pray in public, should figure out how to bless people instead of cursing them. Women are not just their neighbors but also people. When asked to pray in public, religious leaders might join Jesus in refusing to have an enemy, and refuse the sly punishment-mentality for which they are so well-known. Women who have a pregnancy they don’t want to continue need health care, not punishments or judgements or inauthentic religion.

I had two abortions. They were blessings to my life as a mother of three and a grandmother of five. I didn’t need religious permission to make these choices. I needed God, who, by the way, is not a punishmentalist but, instead, guides me in all my decisions large and small.

I would never want Judge Barrett to violate her conscience by having an abortion. I would also never want her to violate my conscience by enforcing her conscience from the Supreme Court Bench. I would want her authentic faith to come through and show love, care, compassion, acceptance, and a true appreciation of the other as a neighbor.

That’s what I am praying for now, that Judge Barrett, or whoever is appointed, comes into authentic faith instead of thinking she is right about everything. Rites can yield rights.

Confession of an E-Bike Convert

By Brian J. Pape, AIA, LEED-AP

Way back in May 2020 I had my tried-and-true bike stolen out from under me, so to speak. I was one of those die-hard bikers that felt that anything with a motor should be regulated and licensed, and kept off the bikeways, despite friends who for years had extolled the virtues of power-assisted bikes and scooters. Shortly after that theft, the tandem bike I used to ride with my wife had mechanical problems, and we started seriously looking for an e-bike to replace it. At about the same time the winds of change were blowing in.

E-bikes have been favored by New York City’s quick delivery riders for years, but vehicle laws put them in a gray area. In 2013 Mayor Bloomberg signed a public safety bill banning e-bikes; Mayor de Blasio continued that ban despite, or immediately. Then, on June 25th, 2020, the city council passed a law allowing e-bikes to be used on most city streets and bikeways just as regular bikes would be. The law also authorizes the establishment of an e-bike share pilot program.

Yet the law does nothing to resolve the contradictory language that prohibits e-bikes of any kind from being ridden on the Hudson River Park Greenway, despite the e-bikes available for rent at Citi Bike docks in Hudson River Park.

“We appreciate this common-sense legislation that clarifies the rules around e-bikes on our streets,” said City Hall spokesman Seth Stein. “Safety for everyone on our roads is our priority, and we look forward to working with legislators and communities as we develop plans to implement the new law.” This didn’t make the big NY Times headlines, but it indicated a sea change in personal transportation, and a challenge to the city’s infrastructure. There’s a need for the city to create affordable and sustainable transportation elements—wider and more connected bikeways, and off-sidewalk parking corrals for bikes.

In the meantime, I will continue riding defensively, always looking out for distracted drivers, other bikes, or pedestrians, and following common-sense safety rules such as wearing a helmet. And since I still ride for the exercise, I’ll be powering down most of the time, especially when I approach the Greenway.

The times, they are a-changing.

Brian J. Pape is a LEED-AP “green” architect consulting in private practice, serves on the Manhattan District 2 Community Board, is Co-chair of the American Institute of Architects NY Design for Aging Committee, and is a journalist who focuses on architecture subjects.
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The Most Dangerous Man Who Ever Lived

By Alec Pruchnicki, MD

Mary Trump, the President’s niece, recently described her uncle as the most dangerous man alive. She may have been too kind. Because of his position, he might be the most dangerous person who ever lived. This is not because he has killed more people than anyone else, at least not yet. More people died from despots from the Middle Ages (Genghis Khan, Tamerlane) to the Twentieth Century (Hitler, Stalin, Mao). Nor is it because he is an authoritarian wannabe who wishes to rule by fiat forever. It’s not even because he is a narcissist who doesn’t care about anyone but himself. It’s because the damage he is doing to the most powerful country on Earth, and possibly the most influential nation that ever existed, may produce environmental damage to the planet like we have never seen in all recorded history.

Trump’s pulling out of the Paris accord could do major harm to the fight against global warming, along with undermining every US government agency involved in environmental research on this issue. All projections are that CO2 is still rising and the melting of Antarctic and Greenland glaciers will continue and maybe accelerate. In fact, there are major sources of greenhouse gases coming into play from forest and peat fires, human activity, tundra thawing and maybe even from methane release from ocean beds. Although unprecedented forest fires and hurricanes seem in our near future, the really unprecedented disaster will be the rising of ocean levels.

Most projections predict a few feet of ocean rise by the end of the century from a variety of causes. This can be a major underestimation and some projections have ten-foot rises by the end of the century. I won’t be around then, but my numerous cousins have children and grandchildren who will be around. They will pay a high price. Possibly as many as several hundred million people living near seashores around the world will have to move, and maybe billions of people will have disruption of their economies as a result. Also, these changes won’t just come and quickly go away like a plague or war. Once the ocean has risen there is no estimate as to how long the disruption will last.

How does this affect the West Village? When hurricane Sandy hit, flood waters reached a few blocks into land. If the ocean were just several feet higher this could have come several blocks further. If upper level projections by the end of the century come true, even a high tide could flood the city, as happens in Miami Beach right now. There is no reason why large portions of New York City, and every other port city on Earth, could not become partially or entirely uninhabitable. Those of us living here might have to forget leaving our co-ops, condos, and houses to our descendants in a generation or two as they will be frequently flooded if not under water. This could very well be the legacy of Trump.

Science cannot be turned off and on easily. A research project or government agency doing work in this area could be closed in a day, as people are fired, or programs are defunded. But to get them started could take years. You have to get initial funding, hire an initial team to start planning research, then spend years doing the research and more years publishing and verifying the findings. A gap of four years in research might set the field back five or ten additional years. A gap of eight years could set the field back decades. There is one problem with this. We don’t have decades.
Remembering the First Village Halloween Parade with Founder Ralph Lee

By Anthony Paradiso

During any other year Villagers would be preparing to line up to take part in the Village Halloween Parade. But this year, that long-standing tradition of marching through the Village will not take place due to the pandemic. Many may know that the Halloween Parade is woven deep into the fabric of the West Village neighborhood, but may not be familiar with how it started.

That is where Ralph Lee comes in. He has lived at Westbeth Artists Housing since 1970. He founded the Village Halloween Parade in 1974, having first conceived the format that the parade would use as a teacher at Bennington College in Vermont. During the spring of 1974 Lee presented an outdoor play on the Bennington college campus that left a deep impression on him.

“I got this idea—we’re going to have scenes that take place in all of these different places and the audience can go from one place to another and witness these scenes. So, we did it and we had a big turnout of students and faculty. It really was an incredible success. It was the first time I had seen my giant puppets outdoors and that was really illuminating to me. They took on a life outdoors that they just never had when they were in a theater and I thought, ‘Wow, this is really amazing’ and I want to do more events outdoors.” This was the genesis of the Village Halloween Parade.

Lee says that before the Village Halloween Parade began he had worked on productions at Bennington College in Vermont. The idea for the parade took off when the Theater for the New City on Jane Street asked Lee to help them conduct a Halloween event. Lee told them, “I’ll do it, but we’re going to do it outdoors,” showing how eager he was to find out if the same format he had used at Bennington College could work on the streets of New York. It did.

The original route, Ralph recalled, started at the Theater for the New City. The parade’s next stop was his home at Westbeth. It then marched to Bleecker Street, proceeding for a while until it made a left turn and concluded at Washington Square Park.

The parade’s founder described what took place along the way: “We staged events in various places along the route—on the doorsteps of brownstones, in little parks, and in playgrounds all along the route,” Lee said, “We all took off as a group and moved to these various locations where our wacky little scenes would take place.”

Lee directed the Halloween Parade for twelve years. When I asked why he stopped he explained, “I really became a little concerned about being able to control what was happening in my apartment on the days right before the parade. My wife and I had a daughter and having this young toddler among all this stuff—it began to feel like my space was being invaded and it was time for a change.”

In light of this year’s presidential election, Lee decided to make a political statement with an art installation of his puppets, viewable in a window display inside the courtyard of Westbeth at 55 Bethune Street. Please go check it out and remember that you are getting a chance to see giant puppets created by a Village legend and the founder of the Village Halloween Parade, Ralph Lee.

Anthony Paradiso covers local sports for WestView News. He draws on the three years of experience he had as the Assistant Sports Editor of Montclair State University’s student newspaper. Currently, Anthony writes for “In The Zone,” a sports media outlet that focuses on sports lifestyle and culture.

Puppeteer and Artist Ralph Lee, who started the Village Halloween Parade in 1974, stands with his contribution to this year’s virtual Halloween Parade happening all over the Village. His craftsmanship can be seen at the Westbeth Home to the Arts on Bethune Street. Photo by Bob Cooke.

When I asked Lee how the parade involved kids, he said, “We ran workshops for kids in the [Jefferson Market] library where they would make silhouettes that would be put up in the windows of the library, and there were school groups that made big critters that could be put in the parade.”

Lee mentioned that the NYPD were incredibly sympathetic toward the parade for as long as he was involved. He also thanked his wife, Casey, who “was involved with the parade from the start, answering innumerable telephone calls” and contributed as a “wonderful costume-maker.”
Getting Specific About Your Anxiety

By Arabella Oz

With the arrival of fall, a new melody of anxiety drifts in. What is it? Actually, the word anxiety has grown obsolete in the world of 2020—covering too much ground to be useful. There’s this kind attached to the fear of getting the virus, or maybe more specifically, getting a loved one sick. We have the agitated ruminations about the election, or a continually declining trust in our systems of leadership. And then the amorphous dread, murmuring underneath your day like an idle engine—you only know it’s there because you haven’t released a full exhale in hours.

The anxiety that I’m noticing show up now is a unique kind of stamina dread. A resounding, “how much more of this can I take?” We figured out how to get through lockdown—there was the novelty of it, the connectivity of a shared experience, the conflicting feelings of relief at a simplified way of life, the imagined deadline of summer. Summer came, summer left. And now a despairing question builds, growing louder and more suffocating: What next?

What next? Our mind has nothing to latch on to. The ground we had built our houses on has been challenged in countless ways. We’re left slipping into an unclear future, un tethered and exposed.

For me, this new wave of anxiety is hard to name because it’s agonizing to sit in. We do almost anything to push past it. Maybe for you, scrolling through social media or the news until sunrise provides some relief. Or you’re drinking or smoking weed every day. Perhaps your distraction is socially sanctioned—exercising more, taking on extra projects at work, helping others. For me, it shows up in how I eat: the faster the better, while I watch something mindless on the closest screen available. I come up from a meal hunched over and breathless.

So this is an invitation to stop and ask yourself, what am I feeling? If the answer is anxious, try to get more specific. What are the exact words going through your head, and what are your go-to ways of Dorothy it out? All we might have control over right now is our ability to drop into what we’re actually experiencing. This might sound like the simplest task, or the most terrifying. One of the reasons it’s hard to resolve anxiety is because we avoid feeling it head on, and for good reason. Of course it’s uncomfortable to sit in discomfort, and maybe we don’t feel like we have the tools to go there. Go slow. Start small. Be gentle.

We’re being pushed into an unprecedented era of not knowing. It seems to grow more intense with each passing month. But once you notice the ways you’re on autopilot, you’ve created a little space, and from there you might see things differently. Maybe 2020 can wake us up to the habitual ways we escape reality, so that whatever is next, we can experience in all of its newness, more engaged than ever before.

Arabella Oz is a resident mental health counselor at The Soho Center for Mental Health and Wellness. She received her MA in Mental Health and Wellness Counseling from NYU, and her BA in Film Studies from Columbia University. In her free time she writes stories, poems, and think pieces.

Pandemic: Yet Another Tremor for Foster Care Youth

By Kieran Loughney

Tess’s great-grandmother’s boyfriend, Fred, despite Tess’s pleas, smoked in the kitchen. She’d complained to Nonny, the matriarch who was now her caregiver. Fred told her: “I’ll smoke where I want.” Reeking of cigarettes, Tess flopped into the passenger seat, shutting my car door hard, not quite slamming it. Before I spoke, she made it clear, “I don’t feel like talking, Kieran.” Earbuds in, she reclined the seat and shut her eyes. For now, as was often the case on these weekly trips to the child welfare offices, Tess needed Tess time.

Ironically, Tess is lucky. While her mother died from a drug overdose and her grandmother remained addicted, Nonny, her great grandmother, took her in. In social work parlance, Tess’s living situation is called kinship placement. High strung at times, Tess was nonetheless an honor student in high school. On this night we were headed for a meeting of young adults and child welfare professionals. Tess would be joined by kids with little or no biological family life, living in foster care, many for years.

Children in foster care, The American Academy of Pediatrics reports, experience PTSD at the same rate as U.S. war veterans, suffering high rates of debilitating depression and low self-esteem. Half won’t graduate from high school and 25% will become homeless at some point in their lives. One program, called Independent Living (IL), provides support and guidance for youth in care. Every Tuesday evening the child welfare agency I worked for hosted a dinner and activity/learning/counseling event with Independent Living. As an incentive to keep them coming, youths were paid twenty dollars for attending each session.

What Independent Living events offer become essential for the emotional well-being of these youths and a vital step in their transition to self-sufficient and well-adjusted adults. Instruction on any number of living skills is presented. Personal budgeting, STDs, nutrition and drugs are among the topics typically covered.

Continued on page 31
Caring for the Village takes a village

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What's That Face?

By Keith Michael

“‘I’m smiling.’

Having half my face covered with a mask, I frequently want to offer assurance about what the rest of my face is saying—like a verbal emoji.

Defiantly maskless beside the couch, Millie is staring at me with wide hopeful corgi eyes, beaming her corgi smile, and sitting tall (as tall as a corgi can sit). I know that if I don’t respond momentarily either with a treat, taking her out for a walk, or both, she also will launch a verbal emoji, “I’m sitting. I’m smiling. DO something!” Wordlessly the request is clear: Give her a treat AND take her out.

We’re welcomed to the street by a cacophony of Blue Jays. It’s a wild fugue of jay jay jay expletives, squeaky door calls, demanding clicks, and miscellaneous whines, not to mention the slalom chase from tree to tree, fire escape to cornice. Generally, I don’t think of birds as having a wide range of facial expressions, but then, I’m thinking as a person. These Jays obviously have a complex language, but what do they see in each other’s faces?

Millie rushes to the curb for the pause after falling leaf. It heads to the base of a tree on the outside of their eye. Raptors and divers flitting from high to low, to and fro, from branch to branch flashing that butter-butt part of their anatomy while a smattering of hyperactive Golden-crowned Kinglets flash the gold of their namesake from the tops of their heads. Playing a maddening game of “catch sight of me if you can” an uncountable number of Ruby-crowned Kinglets are flitting from high to low, to and fro, and to. These perky fellows have a feature of expression that surely their buddies can read: they can move their “scalp” so that the ruby crown stands at attention like a Cardinal’s crest, or tuck it in neatly so that it is nearly invisible. I suppose we have a vestigial colloquial expression “it made my hair stand on end” but just think if we could bouffant our hair at will!

Thank you, Millie, this has been an excellent fall afternoon of bird watching. Without you, I’m smiling.

Visit keithmichaelnyc.com for links to ALL of my WestView articles, books, photographs, and the latest schedule of New York City WILD! urban adventures in nature outings throughout the five boroughs (currently on hold). Follow me on Instagram @newyorkcitywild for daily photos from around NYC.

Thrifting

By Roberta Curley

Would you enjoy visiting an iconic Greenwich Village neighborhood? Would rummaging through a cache of treasures suit you? What about entering a thrift shop to scout out its latest donations? Would snapping a bargain lift your spirits? If such pursuits tickle your fancy, you’re a likely candidate for THRIFTING. The West Village boasts its own style of “goods recycling and selling” (circa 1990). It’s called Housing Works West Village Thrift Shop, at 245 West 10th Street—just east of Hudson Street (212-352-1618). It is open Monday-Saturday from 12:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m., and Sunday from 12:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

The shop is non-profit and upscale. Its mission is to end the dual crises of HIV/AIDS and homelessness by providing life-saving services. These include legal aid support, job training, health care, advocacy and more. (There are ten Housing Works Thrift Shops, all located in Manhattan and Brooklyn.) Browsing in the West Village shop, you’ll encounter decor (lamps, pillows, furniture, paintings, etc.), shoes, lots of clothing (mostly seasonal), kitchen goods, books, accessories (jewelry, hats, belts, pocketbooks) and loads more stuff. I’ve gotten a vintage gray leather Burberry blazer for forty dollars, and a new navy Under Armour ColdGear sweatshirt for thirty-five dollars. Recently, I spotted a Ralph Lauren Pink Lady Classics cotton shirt for $15, originally $85. A pair of white Boss pants, originally $395, were marked down to $25. Thrifting depends on timing and luck.

The West Village shop offers a mix of new, gently-used, and vintage items. The element of surprise fosters thrift shop magic. One person’s purged goods are another’s platinum. The 10th Street shop is organized as neat as a pin, and you will never be rushed out. Masks are required and sanitizier is available near the entrance. Even if you leave empty-handed, you’ll have taken a spin through “fantasyland.” Plus, you’ve ventured outside your home and into the hood. This local thrift shop runs without a hitch thanks to an amiable, remarkably knowledgeable staff.

BTW—Housing Works has instituted an “eShop.” Fashionistas across the country are invited to gaze at merchandise updated daily—24/7. Shop online at eshop.housingworks.org.

Warning: thrifting is addictive! And holidays are upon us. I follow the rule: “buy one gift for them, one gift for me.” By spring, my closets are bursting; so I bag up my excess treasures and donate them back to Housing Works!
What Leadership Can Do

Two months later, Kennedy was dead, also killed by an assassin, altering the course of history—here and abroad.

These are his words from that evening:

“I have some very sad news for all of you, and I think sad news for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee.

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort.

In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it’s perhaps well to ask what kind of a nation we are, and what direction we want to move in. For those of you who are Black—considering the evidence [there] evidently is that there were White people who were responsible—you can be filled with bitterness, and with hatred, and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization—Black people amongst Blacks, and White amongst Whites, filled with hatred toward one another.

Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with an effort to understand [with] compassion and love.

For those of you who are Black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust of the injustice of such an act, against all White people, I would only say that I can also feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a White man. But we have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort to understand, to get beyond or go beyond these rather difficult times.

My favorite poet was Aeschylus. He once wrote: “Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness; but is love and wisdom and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of justice toward those who still suffer within our country whether they be White or whether they be Black.

So I ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King, that’s true, but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love—a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

We can do well in this country. We will have difficult times; we’ve had difficult times in the past, and we will have difficult times in the future. It is not the end of violence, it is not the end of lawlessness, and it is not the end of disorder.

But the vast majority of White people and the vast majority of Black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings that abide in our land, and dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.

Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people. Thank you very much.”

Senator Robert F. Kennedy
Indianapolis, Indiana
April 4, 1968
Dirty Hands and a Relaxed Mind

By Melissa Lim

2020 for me would read something like this; January, February, Corona, December. I relocated here from London in June 2019, so just over a year ago, to the corner of Perry/Hudson in the West Village, never thinking I would live America. Who knew then that I picked the most strange of times to move to the most extra-ordinary city.

I debated leaving the city when the pandemic hit, but I stayed and again during the riots around BLM. The Village was all boarded up at its peak and I really felt the city would run out of plywood, and to those who left the city it looked defeated. I would be lying if I didn't have days where I felt the same—robbed of the full ‘New York’ experience in my first year; with late night jazz clubs and somewhere to always go. But the hum of the city is coming back and the plywood has already had a second lease of life in the great outdoor patios!

Like many of my friends the pandemic has taken its toll on our mental health in different ways; and even for the most resilient of us as we faced changes to work and life. The very things that brought us here to this vibrant city meant that the change in pace was so much harder; the shutdowns brought all the more anxiety and a huge craving for stimulation and a way to expend the restless energy.

It is with this restless energy, desire to soothe the mind and a resolve to use this time inside, Potteree (www.potteree.com) was born in the West Village. A clay pottery box designed to connect you with your friends and family, your next app date or self-care time in the comfort of your own home. It comes fully equipped with all the tools you will need to get creative and hand building.

The pandemic has not passed, and as temperatures cool we keep a watchful eye over daily cases threatened by the risk of further lockdowns. Potteree represents a reimagining of a way we can connect with each other and disconnect from technology. Providing respite from the uncertain world around us through the restorative and meditative benefits of ‘art therapy’ to relax the mind and reduce the stress.

But Potteree also represents the opportunities that have come from lives upended; and a green shoot emerging from the darkness and tragedy of Coronavirus. The resilience in the city to come back better and to not be beaten by the most grim of circumstances. It has been just over a year but perhaps I have the grit to belong in New York City after all.

Potteree boxes are $50 for a home activity for two people to mix up your next weekend.

Melissa Lim is a West Village resident, creature of habit and global citizen. Founder of Potteree.

Autumn Report from a Maine Island During the Pandemic

By Hannah Reimann

October 22, 2020

The eagles have flown to warmer climes to hunt, the pogie’s are no longer splashing in the cove, a delightful loon with his spotted coat has been visiting for the past week and the leaves of the deciduous trees and bushes are changing color every day.

The heron is back at low tide this morning, the crows are calling from the spruces, five ducks swim together as the water comes up after they’ve waddled in the mud. But it’s not the busy, summerly playfield of hunters and mates visiting and revisiting. I miss the phoca vitulina, my beloved harbor seals. I only see one occasionally now at the highest, calmest tides.

Living in Maine for three months has provided a contrast to the city unlike I’ve ever known, due mostly to COVID-19 and how it’s changed the planet for us all. My bond to nature has grown ever stronger this fall, sometimes for the better and, often, with hours of countryside work, unexpected for this city dweller. I hate killing creatures, but I’ve had to poison the mice before they become a colony. At dawn, I sometimes hear the last scratching and scrambling of a rodent running across the wooden floor for dear life. My wood stove is stoked morning and evening and I find myself carrying in countless loads of firewood from the shed to heat the house. Now the shed is empty and my friends, Addison and Jeff, are helping me out because they have huge seasoned piles of logs to last all winter. Without them I would be very cold.

On the topic of coronavirus, we remain at zero infection and zero death on this island. Free drive-in flu shots were given at the medical center and I lined up at 8am one morning with a dozen other cars. A couple of days later I was informed that a member of the ferry crew got a cold and had to be tested for COVID-19. Three boats were canceled as everyone on the island waited with bated breath for the test results. Most people have more than one job here and there was no handy replacement for the sick ferry worker. Dinner reservations were canceled. Everyone stayed in more than usual. With 1200 year-round residents, even a small outbreak could bankrupt the island. Street talk took over: he tested positive! No, negative. Wait, no one actually knows yet. Ah, thank God, the test was negative.

I had my sights set on a pre-owned Volvo for sale on the mainland that Jeff found for me, the only car under $5000 on the mainland. The ferry wasn’t running and I couldn’t leave the island. Luckily, he held the car for me and I quickly bought it two days later. I remain resistant to public transportation and wonder if I’ll be willing to take the subway when I get back to the city in November.

One day ago a Waldo county church outbreak was linked to 42 COVID-19 cases, similar to a wedding over the summer in Millinocket. A prison worker was infected. There are only around 6000 cases reported and 146 deaths in the state, but will Maine weather the winter all right? I always remember Bill Gates saying that 100 cases was all that was needed in any community for this beast to stay around for years.

By Spring, we’ll have another picture of the world and the pandemic. I cannot know exactly when I’ll be back at my island cottage. I continue to find this life of spontaneity and planless-ness astonishing. For a few minutes I see that we can all be like the seal, the heron, the mink and the loon, the way we were born to be, living in the moment. I’ll make it a point to remember them during the New York winter this year while I’m watching CNN and monitoring what is safe. I am ever grateful to these animals, their splendid habitat and to my friends, all of which have outshone COVID-19 like nothing else for me.
Guy Wiggins, Third Generation Painter, Scholar and Diplomat, Dies at 100

By Michael Astor

Guy Wiggins, a third generation painter who traveled the world as a soldier, scholar and diplomat before devoting himself to an art career that lasted nearly half a century, has died at 100. The cause was cancer.

He was the son of a famous American Impressionist, Guy C. Wiggins and grandson of a celebrated Hudson River School painter, John Carleton Wiggins. Mr. Wiggins had the pedigree for a career in art but was discouraged by his father, whose career suffered through the Depression. He eventually entered the family trade at age 55 and then managed to outlast and out-earn many of his contemporaries. His paintings regularly sell at high prices at Sotheby’s and Christie’s and his images have been used on Cartier’s annual Christmas card.

Well into his 90s, Mr. Wiggins could still recall the stories announcing that a third generation artist, John Carleton Wiggins had helped establish an art colony decades earlier. His father and mother shrewdly bet that they could sell art lessons even if they couldn’t sell art and opened the Guy Wiggins Art School there in order to make ends meet. The school was successful and became a beacon for aspiring artists.

When the Second World War broke out, Mr. Wiggins was assigned to counter-intelligence attached to the Eighth Army in the South Pacific. In Japan, he was assigned to MacArthur’s headquarters and helped with the reorganization of the country’s post-war government.

Wiggins left the military in 1946 and went to UCLA to finish his undergraduate degree. He earned a master’s degree from Harvard in International Affairs and completed further post-graduate work at the London School of Economics. He then joined the US Foreign Service where he served from 1958 until 1976.

On a Ford Foundation grant in 1956, he drove overland from London to India through Afghanistan and Iran. This adventure was chronicled in the press and in letters to his father.

After returning home he met Dorothy Palmer who had fallen in love with him before they had even met as she had listened to his father’s reading of his letters to her mother who was a patron of the elder artist.

The couple married on Sept. 26, 1959, at St. Thomas Church on Fifth Avenue—a location that required the two, both atheists, to get baptized. From then on, they were inseparable lovers over 62 years of marriage. They came to be known by multiple generations of New Yorkers for their storied romance and their over-the-top gatherings.

The couple took up residence at St. Thomas Church on Fifth Avenue—a location that required the two, both atheists, to get baptized. From then on, they were inseparable lovers over 62 years of marriage. They came to be known by multiple generations of New Yorkers for their storied romance and their over-the-top gatherings.

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The couple took up residence at St. Tho...
The Big Knife

By Jeff Hodges

In 1973, when I was in college, I rented an apartment on East 7th street between Avenues C and D in Alphabet City. Like most of my decisions in those days, this one was based on a combination of arrogance and stupidity: I had seen a film called *The Street of the Flower Boxes* which depicted East 7th St. as an oasis of community solidarity in a wasteland of poverty and violent crime.

From the *New York Times* February 19, 1973: *The film’s merits aside, its implications are, at the very least, questionable. Viewers not familiar with the Lower East Side could very well relax and feel assured that the area’s problems have been solved with flower boxes. The reality would hardly encourage relaxation.*

The apartment cost $100 a month. My first night there I heard a man cry out in the backyard and the unmistakable sound of metal hitting bone. The next morning I was overwhelmed in the hallway by the super in pursuit of an intruder. On the street, I saw a man with a tire iron fighting another man with a crowbar, and a crowd placing bets on the outcome.

Undaunted, I attended my classes at NYU and drove a cab at night. None of my classmates came to visit, but I chalked that up to a suburban mindset.

I wasn’t immune to violent encounters. One night on the subway, I was attacked by a group of kids who sliced up my jacket with razor blades and practiced their kung-fu on the mirrors. After rehearsing in front of the mirror for a couple of weeks I had it down pat. The knife was in my pocket the night a guy stole my cab. My cab was unlocked with the engine running when I went upstairs to my apartment. When I came back down it was gone.

But a minute later it reappeared. My cab was turned around and walked back and this time they were wielding a long piece of metal like a battering ram, I decided to call the cops for a ride home.

I congratulated myself for not having parted with any cash in these encounters. But one night in Tompkins Square Park a couple of guys grabbed me, put a knife to my throat, took out my wallet, extracted a five dollar bill, and handed back my wallet—all without a word from any of us.

I recounted this to the guys who ran the corner bodega. They told me I was crazy to walk around without a blade. They sold me a Buck knife and turned it into a street weapon by loosening the blade until it snapped open with a flick of the wrist. Then they took me in the back and showed me how to use it.

Apparenty you don’t dance around like in *West Side Story*. You slash the face and punch the torso. Slash and Punch. We practiced for a while until they felt I had a semblance of the operation.

After rehearsing in front of the mirror for a couple of weeks I had it down pat. The knife was in my pocket the night a guy stole my cab. My cab was unlocked with the engine running when I went upstairs to my apartment. When I came back down it was gone.

But a minute later it reappeared. My hand went to my back pocket, but the thief came out beaming and thanked me for the opportunity to drive around the block, saying he always wanted to see what it was like to drive a car. I extended my felicitations and was happy to find the cigar box with my cash still on the floor.

I only had to take the knife out once. I was walking in Times Square when I passed a hooker struggling with a package.

“You got a knife, honey?” she asked.

I reached into my back pocket and with a flick of the wrist I opened the blade and handed it to her. She put it to use, and returned it with a smile.

In those troubled times, it was good to be prepared.

Karen’s Quirky Style

By Karen Rempel

This column is for all of you who have a favorite old sweater that you want to hang onto, even though your main squeeze pressures you to get rid of it and has tried three times to donate it to Goodwill. This quirky look is a real mash-up of styles and periods, but my vintage Mack- er hoodie ties it all together. *COVID* chic is comfy chic, and when the chill creeps in at this time of year, we need the comfort of our beloved old pieces more than ever. You know what I’m talking about—our softly tattered clothes that have been with us for many a year—maybe even for a lifetime or beyond. My dad emigrated to Canada in 1956, and he bought an olive green corduroy jacket with a sheepskin collar with his second paycheck. It’s older than me, and it’s my most treasured garment.

This navy hoodie is a close second. My true love at the turn of the century (as opposed to my true loves in other decades) gave me this Macker hoodie—designed by his brother, an up-and-coming sportswear designer—in the late ’90s. I used to call it the “Macker Wacker” because of the mirror image logo. This hoodie has been with me through many great moments in my life, including helping my sister paint my nephew’s baby bedroom before he was born. I wore it to paint at my log cabin in the BC wilderness as well; it was a staple for all the tough and dirty jobs that living alone in the wilderness entailed.

I got a kick out of pulling the Macker Wacker out of the drawer for this photo shoot at Cafe Wha? A familiar sight at the corner of MacDougal Street and Minetta Lane, this historic club is another inspired location choice of photographer Phil’s. But when we got there on a sunny Saturday afternoon, we were surprised to see that the iconic side door was blocked by a giant blue-tarped mound wrapped in chains. But hey—if there’s a chain, wrap me in it! So instead of talking about the legendary Cafe Wha?, I’m going to tell you about another Village legend.

There are multiple campaigns underway to create a Jimmy Webb block on St. Mark’s Place, where Trash and Vaudeville was originally located. Jimmy died in April of this year. Known as “punk rock’s unofficial shopkeeper,” for many years he was the manager and buyer at Trash and Vaudeville, the coolest place for punk and rock gear like my glittering Ziggy Stardust boots. He opened his own boutique, I NEED MORE, in 2017. His *Rolling Stone* obit describes his fashion philosophy: “Dressing is all about the whole look… If one thing stands out, you’re a beautiful coat walking down the street, or a pair of pants on the subway. With everything on, even if the elements are different from each other, it blends.” You could say this mash-up outfit is a tribute to Jimmy.

For more fun Philip Maier photos, see karensquirky-style.com.

West Village Model Karen Rempel, wrestles with chains outside Cafe Wha?. Photo by Philip Maier.

Style Notes

YRU Black Glitter Boots with Ziggy Stardust Silver Lightning Bolts. Trash and Vaudeville. 96 East 7th Street.

Beyond Yoga x Barre3 Camo- Patterned Leggings. Fresh from Barre3 West Village Studio. West 8th Street.

Vintage Bosa Olive Green Pin-Striped Man’s Shirt. The buttons are on the wrong side! Gift from a friend. Vancouver, BC.

Vintage Macker Snowboarder Hoodie. Gift from a friend. Vancouver, BC.

Parkhurst Gray Cloche Fleece Hat with Faux Fur Trim. The Bay. Montréal, Québec.

Single Dangly Earring with Black Fur Puff. CVS. 475 Sixth Avenue.


*“In the Shadows” MAC Frost Eye Shadow and “Amazon…AmazOff” O.P.I Nail Lacquer.*
Style on the Street: November Neutrals

Follow us on Instagram @styleonthestreet_WestViewNews
Submit your favorite neighborhood fashion looks for a chance to be featured.

Photos by Dusty Berke and Karilyn Prisco.

STACY KESSLER
“Stacy Bag”
Made in USA, PETA-approved Vegan leather bag, optional crossbody. Red mask w/ Swarovski crystals
shop.stacykessler.com

MULBERRY AND GRAND, 277 Bleecker Street
“Square Cat-Eye Sunglasses”
99% UVA/UVB Sun Protection
mulberry-grand.com

MILA
“Leaf Flare Long Sleeve”
Full-print dye sublimation,
Made in Brazil
IG @milanybrazil

NAO WELLNESS
“Rainbow Crystal Ear Seed Kit”
Balance your mind and body w/ adhesive ear seeds. Place on ear acupressure points to address physical and emotional energies.
aowellness.com

BOOKMARC, 400 Bleecker
“Peanuts x Marc Jacobs Phone Case”
iPhone 11 Polyurethane case featuring Peanut character Lucy. marcjacobs.com

Local Finds. Local Love.

Support some of our favorite West Village shops and designers.
Curated by Karilyn Prisco
The Great Divine

By Robert Heide

A slight, shy, sensitive young man named Harris Glenn Milstead from Baltimore, had a loving mother named Frances who doted on him and wondered what might become of her boy as an adult, thinking, could he make it in the ‘real’ world? She needn’t have worried or pondered on his future. Under the tutelage of the slick, driven and ambitious writer and director of experimental films John Waters, Glenn, after gaining 300 pounds, became a ‘drag queen’ who eventually became a superstar, renamed “Divine” by Waters, in a series of outrageous Waters movies. Waters himself said he “was inspired to a life of cheap exhibitionism, exaggerated sexual desires and love for all that is trash–ridden in cinema.” This past summer on vacation at the Jersey shore in Bay Head, my niece Carol screened a documentary film made in 2013 entitled I Am Divine—The True Story of the Most Beautiful Woman in the World by Jeffrey Schwarz whose many other films include Tab Hunter Confidential and Spine Tinglers! The William Castle Story.

In the 60s and 70s ‘outsider’ shoestring budget films were plentiful and popular, including those made by John Waters, Kenneth Anger, Mike and George Kuchar, and several others. At one point in the 60s I was hanging out at Warhol’s ‘Factory’ where, in addition to his Pop Art, Andy also was making what he called ‘underground’ movies. Everyone at the Factory, including Andy, were on every kind of drug—code, heroin, methamphetamine or whatever was being freely passed around. I only remembered in recent years after some images of me appeared on the internet that I had acted in two of Warhol’s films, entitled Camp and Batman/Dracula, opposite the great filmmaker and actor Jack Smith. I was also writing plays and in 1965 Warhol became fascinated by my play The Bed which starred two young handsome actors in their ‘undies’ in an existential stasis, drugging and bingeeing on booze and not being able to make it in or out of a huge, big bed which comprised the entire stage at the pioneering tiny off–off Broadway theater the Caffe Cino on Cornelia Street. Andy, using the same actors, filmed my play at artist Richard Bernstein’s loft on the Bowery, and it subsequently premiered as a split–screen black and white film at Jonas Mekas Cinematheque which was located then at the 41st Street Theater. After the run at the Cinematheque Andy withdrew the film and deposited it in a vault where it has only recently been rediscovered and is being painstakingly digitized by the Warhol Museum in conjunction with MOMA and the Whitney.

Backtracking now and thinking of Divine who became a unique over–the–top zaftig star sensation in 1972 in the notorious smash hit John Waters Pink Flamingos which attracted stoned–out crowds at the Elgin Theater in Chel–sea—now the joyce—where it was shown at midnight for several years. Divine’s hair, make–up, costumes, and indeed her whole style as well as the design and look of the sets in most of Waters’ movies, were by Van Smith. All the actors were from Baltimore and they included blue–haired David Lockery, Mink Stole, Cookie Mueller and Edith Massey. Playing Divine’s mother, Miss Edie, the grossly overweight Massey sits in a baby crib in Divine’s trailer, wearing only a bra and girdle, obsessively consuming eggs brought to her by ‘Mister Egg Man’ who indulges her egg–eating addiction. If deprived of eggs she screams and cries like a two–year–old. The ridiculous plot of the movie involves Divine trying to defend her title of “the filthiest person alive” from being usurped by Connie and Raymond Marble, a couple who run an inner–city school drug business as well as a baby ring which sells illegitimate babies only to qualified Lesbian couples. Raymond also has a sideline where he exhibits himself in local parks, revealing a kielbasa or chicken neck tied to his penis, shocking women who run off screaming, leaving their purses behind. It is, however, the last scene in Pink Flamingos that made both Waters and Divine famous—to the tune of How Much Is That Doggie in the Window sung by Miss Patti Page, the director has his star picking up doggie poop from a newly made pile and scooping it into his mouth, showing as reality the famous phrase “shit eating grin” while Waters, also the narrator, stating that not only is “Divine the filthiest person alive, but she is also the filthiest actress alive!” In a film famous for its exhibitionism, nudity, voyeurism, sodomy, bestiality, masturbation, gluttony, vomiting, rape, and incest, the act of coprophagia seems to have topped them all in notorious outrageousness.

Divine made many movies for John Waters, including Multiple Maniacs where she is raped by a giant lobster and another where she plays both the victim in a rape as well as the perpetrator, a gross bus driver played by herself. Among my favorite moments on film is where she declares “who wants to die for art?” after which she starts firing bullets into a terrified audience. Other classic Divine films include Desperate Living, Female Trouble; and Cecil B. Demented. As time went on the movies became mainstream and they included Polyester which offered scratch n’ sniff cards, Lust in the Dust with Tab Hunter, and Hair–spray, which also starred Ricki Lake, Debbie Harry, and Jerry Stiller. In addition to performing in disco clubs and launching a recording career, Divine also had a stage career before her untimely death at age 43 in 1988. A close friend of mine, Ron Link, who had directed two of my plays, Statue and Why Tuesday Never Has a Blue Monday both starring sultry, blonde Marilyn Roberts, invited me to have brunch at Elephant & Castle on Greenwich Avenue where he was meeting up with Divine who he was directing in a prison comedy satire written by Tom Eyen called Women Behind Bars. Divine ordered up a mushroom omelet dish with brown gravy and, staring at it for a moment, burst out laughing and mimicked eating her meal with her hands in imitation of her most famous ‘scou–up’ scene in Pink Flamingos. After Ron gave Divine a makeover, as he had done for Candy Darling and Jackie Curtis earlier, turning her into a more glamorous version of herself with new gowns, hairstyling and makeup, Divine made a big splash in a play, also by Eyen, which Ron directed entitled Neon Woman. It had a successful, extended run at a midtown dance club named Hurrah’s and co–starred Holly Woodlawn, William Duft–Griffin, Sweet William Edgar, Brenda Bergman, Lady Hope Stansbury, and Helen Hanft, who was tagged by Paris Match “the Queen of Off Off Broadway.” Helen, who starred in one of my plays, entitled Muster Suck, is also in the documentary I Am Divine, along with many other talking heads including Lisa Jane Persky, Tab Hunter, Divine’s mother Frances, John Waters, and Harris Glenn Milstead, aka Divine.

Robert Heide’s most recent publication, Robert Heide 25 Plays is for sale on Amazon. For more on Divine read Not Simply Divine! by Jay Bernard, from Virgin Books. I Am Divine—The True Story of the Most Beautiful Woman in the World is available on Prime Video—Amazon.com.
**Art Under Plague: Galleries in Greenwich Village During the Pandemic**

By Fr Graeme Napier

Greenwich Village is known both for its art and for its live music scene. Our article in the October edition of WVN looked at the impact of the pandemic on the live music venues in the Village, reviewing the responses of some twenty of our most notable venues. This article, similarly, examines the effect of COVID-19 on our art galleries (public, not-for-profit, university, and commercial) by looking at some 35 of the Village’s best-loved art spaces, as a small but representative sample of the plethora of galleries, large and small, which characterize the culture of the Village.

The following 21 galleries are, sadly, now temporarily closed to in-person visiting. We include their websites, where they exist, for those who wish to view their art online. Given that you cannot view this art in person, perhaps this list will encourage you to spend some cold, wet November evening exploring these Village galleries virtually from the comfort of your own home.


The following six galleries are open to in-person viewing by appointment only (but, of course, display their art online also). Time Arts (178 Bleeker Street: timearts.com). Alyssa Davis Gallery (2 Cornelia Street: alyssadas-visgallery.com). Eli Klein Gallery (398 West Street: galleryek.com). 80WSE (NYU: see below for details). Ivy Brown Gallery (765 Hudson Street: ivybrownagallery.org). JHB Galleries (26 Grove Street: jhbgalley.com).

For those who enjoy the traditional leisurely walk around the Village’s galleries (and its cafes), here are six galleries which remain open to ‘walk-in’ patrons. (But see below for public and university galleries). Noting that all these galleries are open on Wednesdays, why not choose a day Wednesday afternoon in November and explore.

Allouche Gallery (82 Gansevoort Street: allouchegallery.com), Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 6pm. Robin Rice Gallery (325 West 11th Street: robinricegallery.com), Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, noon to 7pm. Revocation Gallery (224 Waverly Place: stjvn.org), Monday through Friday, 11am to 5pm. Margo Feiden Galleries (15 East 9th Street: alichsfeld.com), Monday through Friday, 9am to 6pm. Stone Sparrow NYC (45 Greenwich Avenue: stonesparrownyc.com), Wednesday through Friday, 2pm to 5pm, and Saturdays noon to 4pm. Vito Schnabel Projects (43 Clarkson Street: vitoschnabel.com), Monday through Saturday, 10am to 6pm.

NYC’s public and university galleries the Whitney (whitney.org) is by far the largest in the Village. It has limited both its hours and its visitor capacity in response to the pandemic. Capacity limiting means that you must book your timed-entry ticket ($25/$18) in advance. The gallery is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and open until 6pm on other days, with the pay-what-you-wish evening session from 6pm to 9pm on Fridays (tickets, free if you like, for this must also be booked in advance). Members still enjoy many benefits, including free entry and members-only viewings on Mondays and Thursdays from 6pm to 7pm.

Pandemic continued from page 22

Mick was waiting outside as we pulled up to his foster home. Tess set the car seat upright as Mick hopped in.

“That’s a fine look for you,” she chirped. Mick had been in foster home. His mother was recently committed to Independent Living was her safe place to vent and celebrate her achievements. For Mick, it provided a chance to socialize with kids who have similar challenges. Rachel, at her lowest moments, came to IL for psychological support. IL has given these young people hope, stability and a community that understands and cares. In my time at the county child welfare agency, I’d seen IL enhance their lives in subtle and profound ways. IL provided the kind of practical advice, whether on budgeting or nutrition, and the supportive community I wish I had had at that stage of my life.

Unfortunately, since March, Independent Living exists online only, due to coronavirus concerns. A video chat is set up, but for such a large group, conversation is less natural. At such a remove, intimacy and connectedness are sacrificed.

Since the coronavirus outbreak we’ve seen business setbacks and failures. Places of worship and schools are struggling to safely open. There have been disruptions in so many aspects of all our lives. For those on the margins of society, like these young people, the pandemic presents yet another ordeal added to challenges they face. What will the long-term consequences be for them, and for us as a society? As a child welfare worker, now retired, I worry about Tess, Mick, Rachel and the others. I hope somehow they’ll weather this crisis and emerge intact, emotionally and physically.

Four special exhibitions run through November (including Lichtenstein’s Entablatures and Caulene Smith’s Mutualities) and Making Knowing: Craft in Art 1920-2019 opens on 22 November.

The Village’s three principal universities/institutes (The New School, NYU, Pratt) operate six important galleries between them, three of which remain open. NYU’s Grey Art Gallery (100 Washington Square East: greyartgallery.nyu.edu) is closed as is its Gulf & Western Gallery (721 Broadway: photo.tisch.nyu.edu). Its 80WSE (80 Washington Square East: 80wse.org), however, remains open (and free) to the public by appointment Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 5 pm. Appointments must be made (by email) at least 48 hours in advance. They have now limited their capacity to two persons at a time, for no more than one hour. No exhibitions run through November. The next show (Jason Hirata: Sometimes You’re Both) opens on 3 December. Parsons School of Design (The New School) runs both the Anna-Maria & Stephen Kellen Gallery and the Arnold & Sheila Aronson Galleries (66 5th Avenue: newschool.edu). Both are open daily from noon to 6pm (and to 8pm on Thursdays). The Pratt Institute’s Manhattan Gallery (144 West 14th Street: Pratt.edu) remains closed.

Because of the number of galleries temporarily closed the usual suite of November openings and drinks receptions, so much part of the Village’s art and social life, is rather thin. One such, however, is the opening of Le Village en dehors: paintings (and prints) of the Village in the summer of 2020 with its out-door dining and Parisian ambience, by local artist Kazuya Morimoto. The opening reception is in three sessions on Tuesday 10 November: 6pm-7pm, 7pm-8pm, and 8pm-9pm. Each session is limited, for COVID safety, to 20 persons on a first-come first-served basis. Reserve a place through St John’s in the Village (admin@stjvn.org or 212 243 6192), the curator body of Revelation Gallery, 224 Waverly Place.

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We have passed the $20,000 dollar mark in our crowdfunding campaign. Yes, you, our readers, have given $20,000 to be sure you will continue to get WestView News every month.

But it is the kind words, the compliments, that really gives me a tug and makes me want to make the paper better and better. But most important, it makes me want to keep producing it every month—and that is not easy.

All newspapers are in trouble—even the Times. The loss of advertising and the competition with the online world will be terminal. One day, not too far away, the only way of seeing a newspaper will be in a museum. But I have decided to keep our paper going as long as I can—and that will mean a few changes.

We will not be able to give out as many free copies, so if you really want your monthly copy of WestView News you may have to subscribe (we will give out fewer and fewer free copies each month). If you really love the paper but can’t afford $2.00 a month, we will give you a free subscription but you have to give us your name and address (see below).

It is my hope that we will find a benefactor who loves the paper and will give it a grant so all those who can’t afford it can still receive it. The paper will become better and better. But we have to start with you—our loyal reader. If you have not subscribed do it now, and if you can’t afford it, tell us and we’ll give you a free subscription.

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