How Can One Man Make War?

By George Capsis

How is it still possible for one mind, one cruelly knotted personality, to initiate a war, to indiscriminately kill adults and children?

Well, think about it: we are all prisoners of our personalities that tie our thoughts and actions with steel cables to a few accidents of birth.

Putin is short and nearly bald and a man who is cruel and inflicts persistent punishment that he is constantly aware of. When he meets the leader of another nation he insists they sit at opposite ends of a 10-foot table. In every photo he does not smile. And he chose to be in the KGB so he could always comfort himself that he had life or death powers over those who sneered at his short bald presence—the comforting absolute power over arbitrary cruelty.

But how, oh how can a vast modern nation like Russia seemingly allow, with indifference, one man to hold his hand over the button to start the indiscriminate killing of human beings? Perhaps it hearkens back to the absolute power of the Czars.

When I was in the fifth grade at P.S. 192, I found myself in the hallway at dismissal time one day with a bunch of other kids and a few parents. One tall and militant mother spoke commandingly in Russian to a student that I didn’t know. Then she turned to me and invited me to her home, to play with her son Eugene Volkoff who became my daily companion until high school.

Eugene’s father had been an officer in the White Guard army of the Czar and was wounded by the emerging communist Red Army. His nurse became his wife after they fled to Turkey, and eventually they came to the U.S. where he worked on Long Island for Igor Sikorsky, the inventor of the helicopter.

Through my long daily friendship with Eugene I became immersed in the White Russian community of New York, and began to understand the god-like power of the czar that Stalin easily acquired and now the short bald Putin covets (he poisoned a critic).

Later, at my first real job at IBM they placed on my desk the very first IBM personal computer. I ripped open the carton to discover a three-volume instruction book and made my way, with great difficulty, through three pages before I shoved it back into the carton and decided to bring it to my new friend Dr. S. I. Samoylenko of the continued on page 3

THOUSANDS OF RUSSIANS IN MOSCOW took to the streets to protest Putin’s invasion of the Ukraine, testing whether the dictator mentality can still survive in Russia. Photo credit: www.kremlin.ru.

The Lost St. Vincent’s Hospital

By Roger Paradiso

Why was St. Vincent’s Hospital closed on April 10, 2010? To understand the complicated and controversial decision, let’s go back to the beginning.

“All hospitals before the 1920s had operated without much money. Physicians donated their time, and costs for nurses and staff tended to be low. For the first time, hospitals required significant funds, just as doctors and surgeons began getting paid and nursing and staffing were professionalized. Many urban public hospitals recast themselves appropriately as major and, sometimes, highly regarded institutions, often establishing affiliation with universities and medical schools. At the same time, they remained committed to the mission of treating all, and they became ever more vulnerable in the marketplace” (America’s Essential Hospitals).

THOUSANDS OF RUSSIANS IN MOSCOW took to the streets to protest Putin’s invasion of the Ukraine, testing whether the dictator mentality can still survive in Russia. Photo credit: www.kremlin.ru.

The Sisters of Charity created St. Vincent’s Hospital to meet the demands of the poor and disadvantaged. They started in a 30-bed facility in a small brick townhouse on East 13th Street. One of the few charity hospitals in New York City, it opened on November 1, 1849 during a cholera epidemic.

When the thyroid epidemic of 1852 began, the sisters filled the hospital to capacity. After outgrowing the original townhouse in 1856, they moved to a former orphanage at the corner of West 11th Street and Seventh Avenue. In 1870 the hospital introduced its first horse-drawn ambulance service. In October 1892 it launched its School of Nursing.

St. Vincent’s also operated a soup kitchen. According to an 1892 New York Times article, St. Vincent’s was distinguished from other hospitals in the city by continued on page 2

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Will More Bus Lanes Solve Traffic Problems?

The polemic, Will More Bus Lanes Solve Traffic Problems For New York City? (New York Times, February 12, 2022) misses the point of why seniors like me ride buses. It has nothing to do with bus speed, but with trip time, comfort and convenience. Trip time is determined by the length of the walk to and from the nearest bus stop and how long I have to wait for a bus as well as how long the bus takes to reach my destination. Comfort is provided by bus shelters with seating space and heat lamps in cold weather, lighting at night as well as available comfortable seats on the bus. Everything else is secondary. I surely don’t want to walk over an hour to 42nd Street from my home on Jane Street. An average bus speed of 6.6 mph is a bargain. The only race I relish is the human race.

—Barry Benepe

Storm Surge Barrier

Brian Pape’s article in the February issue of WestView describing the proposed Storm Surge Barrier across New York Harbor fails to address two important concerns; First, the Sandy Hook National Wildlife Preserve be destroyed at the southern end of the gates, but the coastal communities at the southern tip of Long Island will be flooded and destroyed as well. The residents of those communities have to be kept in the loop.

I believe that NYC must develop a resilient response to future surges over the long run. It cannot change its topography, but it can reshape its shoreline and amend its zoning laws.

—Barry Benepe

Hospital continued from page 1

its feeding of “a large number of tramps and other destitute persons.” The poet Edna St. Vincent Millay got her middle name from the hospital, where her uncle’s life was saved in 1892.

The hospital served New York City and its beloved Greenwich Village residents for 161 years. It was the place to go when the survivors of the Triangle Shirt Waist Factory and the survivors of the Titanic needed care, and many of their lives were saved. If you remember the first World Trade Center attack in 1993, St. Vincent’s was a designated trauma center for the many injured in that vicious terrorist bombing.

And on the dark day of September 11th, 2001, when the second World Trade Center attack took place, the Sisters of Charity and the amazing staff of nurses and doctors stood by to attend to the more than 800 injured.

Years after the terrorist attack on 9/11, I talked to several families who had waited outside St. Vincent’s for news about their loved ones. They told me that from the street corner they could see the plume and then the haze of the Trade Center explosion. These families, holding onto every bit of hope, met there that day and for several days after, until it became obvious that their loved ones would not be coming home. Many nurses and doctors tended to the distraught families of those who had been trapped in the Trade Center tomb. Still hoping, these families left postcards and photos of their loved ones. They usually left a phone number to call if anyone knew anything about them. These notices remained for weeks, until a storm destroyed them. In their place, St. Vincent’s and people like Dusty Berke maintained them on a wall of tiles right across the street from the hospital. Each tile contained a message from the family of someone who died in the Trade Center. A memorial remembering the victims of the worst day in modern American History is held every year. You can read the tiles, which are kind of gravestones for the missing and dead souls, at the southeast corner of West 11th Street and Seventh Avenue.

These tiles also exist as a remembrance for St. Vincent’s Hospital, that died on April 10, 2010. On that dark day the staff placed notices taped to the wall near the emergency room entrance—St. Vincent’s was closed.

I remember walking past the former St. Vincent’s when they were building an expensive condo building. Suddenly, an ambulance roared past what used to be the ER entrance ramp on Seventh Avenue. But there was no emergency room there now, and the ambulance flew by me on its way to another hospital (probably uptown on the East Side). I remember thinking—I hope it makes it in time.

“Maybe the name of St. Vincent’s will fall into the background in another generation or so,” says current Sister of Charity Jane Iannuccelli, “but for the men and women who were in this place, what seeds were sown in them and what they take into the future, you can’t take that away.”

“Almost every health care crisis that has existed in our city,” Sister Iannuccelli says, “St. Vincent’s has responded to...I say St. Vincent’s not being here is a big loss to our city” (America, the Jesuit Review).

Stay tuned for part two of this series, which covers the AIDS crisis and the reasons behind the closing of St. Vincent’s Hospital. What do you think about the loss of St. Vincent’s? Write to George Capsis at WestView News.
Shoplifting Besieges the West Village

By Frank Quinn

The West Village is struggling with the citywide plague of shoplifting, raising troubling new concerns. Particularly vulnerable are large chain stores that don’t expect employees to confront thieves and potentially risk their own safety or the wellbeing of customers.

Some stores have closed, such as the long-time Rite Aid on Sixth Avenue and West 13th Street, while others are using inconvenient security measures such as locking up everyday items that now require customer service to access.

This past fall, a new trend appeared across retail stores: many ceased re-stocking their shelves. That trend now appears to have established itself in the Village, with the CVS on Sixth Avenue and West 12th Street and the Duane Reade on Seventh Avenue and West 14th Street frequently leaving their shelves bereft of staple items.

Police at the 6th precinct have stated that most local theft is carried out by recidivists who have often been arrested previously but reappear in the area. Their motive is to steal everyday items that are easy to resell on street corners in other parts of the city.

“This is not a good indicator in a desirable neighborhood,” says Ryan Garson, a Compass real estate agent with extensive experience in the West Village. “My hope is that this issue won’t escalate with more stores closing and residents losing access to convenient shopping.”

Frank Quinn is a media executive, parent and musician. Linkedin.com/in/frankjquinn

Soviet Academy of Science in Moscow.

When I arrived at the Moscow airport I was greeted by a hand-written sign stating no foreign newspapers or magazines were permitted to enter the Soviet Union. I felt the command was so ridiculous; I strode right through the customs barrier with the Sunday Times under my arm.

Dr. Samoylenko was not Russian; he was Ukrainian. I did not know of any difference then, and only now, looking back, as Putin Sends his tanks into the Ukraine, do I recognize the difference.

Dr. Samoylenko took me on a trip to his home in Ukraine and I was struck by the cruelty of the Germans whose tanks had blasted tortured mounds of earth on their way to Moscow.

The Ukraine has been the path of war since Napoleon.

Dr. Samoylenko invited me to a group meeting at the Soviet Academy of Science. At the head of the table was the Communist Party’s designated leader. (It seemed that no meeting of any importance was held without the control of the party leader. He was not a scientist, but dominated the meeting with irritable questions and complaints.)

And here is Putin, trained as a KGB secret police officer, not in the “science” of government. He does not want to allow Ukraine to become a part of NATO because it is an affront to him as the “leader of Russia.”

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With searching intensity we pause and review the education and qualifications of a supreme court judge; but we allow a Putin or Trump to push their way in as our leaders.
February marked the beginning of a collaborative effort to work to resolve the perplexing problems posed by the Open Restaurants emergency program, in order for the city to propose permanent rules for outdoor dining. The February workshop was brought together by the NY Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIANY), and called the OPEN RESTAURANTS INNOVATION WORKSHOP. Since it includes not just designers, civic groups and foreign participants, but also representatives from the city Department of Transportation (DOT), the Mayor’s Office of People with Disabilities (MOPD), and the Economic Development Commission (NYCEDC), they hope for a coordinated effort to create a more equitable and sustainable solution for the future program.

This effort is part of the rulemaking process that city agencies must take when proposing a rule, to provide New Yorkers with an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed rules, to encourage transparency in the rulemaking process. It is known as the City Administrative Procedure Act, or CAPA.

When City Council voted to morph the emergency program into a permanent Open Restaurants program, totally under the city DOT auspices, panic ensued, since the DOT had already failed at enforcing existing ‘rules of the road’. A wild west of self-certified sheds proliferated across the city. In 2019, there were 1200 sidewalk cafes in the city, with community board oversight; by 2022, there were 12,000 outdoor cafes, with no community board oversight. A city councilman’s 2021 survey of West Village Open Restaurants sheds found that 93% of the sheds violated at least one of the existing rules for their construction, such as lack of access for those with disabilities, failure to provide adequate pathways, and enclosures that present unsanitary conditions.

Certainly, this is not the first effort by the creative community to address the complex nature of the Open Restaurants program. As WestView News reported in the February 2021 issue, designers from across the five boroughs, under the collective name “Design Corps”, had pitched in to help restaurant proprietors build better quality sheds for outdoor dining at the start of the pandemic back in June 2020.

Then in December 2021, an ad hoc group called Alfresco NYC brought the Regional Planning Association (RPA), the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, and the Design Trust for Public Space together for a roundtable discussion of accessibility, community engagement, quality of life, and equity for the program.

The Department of City Planning and DOT website nyc.gov/openrestaurants shows the Alfresco NYC draft design guidelines, even though the city’s first draft of design guidelines won’t be published until March 2022. The stated Alfresco goals hope for joint coordination of enforcement issues, with DSNY (Sanitation) in charge of garbage, NYPD (Police) in charge of noise violations, DOHMH (Health) enforcing food safety, while DOT enforces barriers, ADA access, amplified sound, and street safety. The Design Goals, already shared by everyone at the roundtables and workshops, include: promote clean, attractive and well maintained setups that enhance the local community and work well; putting safety first, providing access for emergency vehicles and ensuring that setups contribute to safe streets for all users; flexibility for the wide variety of activity on NYC streets such as emergency utility work, maintenance and sanitation, varying street and neighborhood contexts.

General goals are fine but how will it look and work, when the permanent program is implemented in 2023? The website also dives into that. The rules could look a lot like the hard-fought-for Sidewalk Café rules previously in place, according to Julie Schipper, representing the DOT at the AIANY Workshop. For instance, the current draft proposal allows no propane heaters and no enclosed dining if there was none prior to January 2020. Again, no amplified sound will be permitted, and the seating may not extend beyond the business’ storefront. Both sidewalk and roadway seating will require license agreements, with license fees attached for any private use of public right-of-way. A full NYC DOT enforcement unit will be formed to enforce roadway structures, ADA compliance, clear path, and amplified noise devices. And the structures will not be allowed to be harbors for rat’s nests. The horrific conditions of nightly noise, garbage and rats caused by the emergency program forced some residents to sue the city to stop the nuisance.

There is also discussion about incorporating features of the DOT Street Seats program, in place for over a decade, where in the seating areas on the streets are open to the public during the day, and all seating is brought in during closing hours, and totally cleared away during winter months.

This sounds like a return to common sense, while opening the program to new parts of the city in an equitable geographic fashion.
Washington Square Park Skateboarders Cry Foul as Police Begin Crackdown

By Sophia Astor

Barrelling through crowds performing their kick flips, heel flips, ollies and slides, Washington Square Park skateboarders are either a minor attraction or major scourge depending on who you talk to. The skaters, often accompanied by a friend capturing their radical moves on video, have become internet stars for a certain segment of New York youth. They’ve also been subjects of hundreds of complaints from a certain, shall we say, older demographic.

Now, since Mayor Eric Adams took office in January, skaters have noticed an increased police presence and they fear their safety.

“Wash is famous for all the weird stuff that happens there. If cops are trying to enforce the law, it feels like law enforcement only responds to the concerns of affluent West Village residents and doesn’t care about the skaters and performers who make the park special,” said Sheryl Woodruff, the deputy director of the Washington Square Park Conservancy.

The crackdown has been a long time coming. “WSPC regularly hears concerns from community members about skateboarding in the Park,” Woodruff said. “We get emails, phone calls, and people approaching in the Park to tell us that they’re worried about their safety.”

The conservancy does not have the authority to regulate skating, but the parks department has fenced off popular skating areas like stairs and ledges.

Police declined repeated requests for comment, but a spokesperson told the Village Sun in 2021 that the department plans to enforce the no skating rule by first educating park-goers, then eventually fining and potentially arresting those who break it.

None of the skaters interviewed have yet been arrested or ticketed but 18-year-old Daniel Galicia, a Bushwick skater with a mop of curly hair and very baggy jeans, said enforcement tactics have gotten aggressive at times and angered skaters, deepening the divide instead of providing a productive solution.

“Park rangers would come all the time and kinda harass us for skateboarding,” said Galicia. “I remember kids getting basically jumped by the park rangers just for skating.”

Skater Henry Coleman, a shaggy-haired 19-year-old from the East Village, says concerns about safety are valid, but it’s also what makes the park what it is.

“I remember how much fun the park was when there was less police presence, and it’s kind of messed up,” said Coleman.

“Wash is famous for all the weird stuff that happens there. If cops are trying to enforce all these rules it loses its spark.”

By Sophia Astor

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March 2022 WestView News
Medical Wisdom is Knighted

By Eric Uhlfelder

Winston Churchill, Sidney Poitier, Paul McCartney. This prestigious list of remarkable people who have been knighted by the British monarchy now includes a friend—a commoner who's anything but.

I met Frank Atherton many decades ago at the University of Pennsylvania when I was writing my first book and he was taking a seminar off from his medical studies at Leeds University in England to see how medicine was taught at Penn.

We reconnected several years ago when he heard about the Five Boro Bike Tour. As a regular in the event, Atherton's subsequent stays at the Incentra Village Hotel in the West Village have made him a bit of an honorary neighbor.

“Little did I know his career in public healthcare had crafted a remarkable compendium of critical public policy experiences that was recently recognized by knighthood. The actual pomp won't occur until later this year when he visits the UK to accept the position of chief medical officer of Wales. In early 2020, less than a month after recognizing the severity of Covid-19, he was part of leadership that decided the UK needed to go into lockdown.”

By Eric Uhlfelder

Running From the Holocaust

By Joel Lobenthal

My father wanted to perform due diligence on Nazism. Seventy years ago, he was studying law at the University of Chicago when he took a year abroad in an exchange program with the University of Frankfurt.

He died exactly one year ago, and I’m now reading a particularly relevant essay that he wrote twenty years ago. Not So Long Ago or So Far Away describes his stay in Germany and the supposition that he wanted to test. “I believed that ordinary Germans knew or suspected what was on the horizon and should have been able to do something to foil the ensuing obscenities. I blamed them for not having done so.”

Yet he was writing this as the Bush–Cheney regime was shredding civil liberties here in America. He watched a feckless American resistance that could not stop Bush’s march to a war of choice in Iraq launched on lies. Dad—Joseph Spiro Lobenthal, Jr.—realized he could no longer pass judgment as easily as he had in his twenties.

In Not So Long Ago or So Far Away, Dad recalls that Frankfurt in 1953 was fast being rebuilt, but entire blocks remained in bombarded-out ruins. On some lots, fenced-in community vegetable gardens grew. Prostitutes stood every few yards on one main thoroughfare leading to the train station. Many were war widows; their customers were mostly Americans who occupied the city. They were headquartered in the former office complex of the IG Farben company. It had been tried at Nuremberg for manufacturing chemicals for genocide.

Germans had been forced to submit to a Truth and Reconciliation process. It attempted to ensure that the population understood exactly what had happened, took some responsibility for it, and was primed to ensure that it never happened again. Obviously it worked, or at least it has so far. But paradoxically, and accidentally what Dad found was a resolute silence on the part of students and faculty to discuss or even acknowledge the recent past.

Occasionally, he was even subject to recriminations: “We had Goebbels and burned books. You have McCarthy and Roy Cohn.” He found this doubly troubling because Frankfurt’s University, named for Goethe, had a long tradition of humanism—that same lineage in Germany’s culture that bred denial in the minds of so many Jews who elected to remain. Post-war, the University was “now distinctly politically Left,” he writes.

What appeared to motivate the Germans Dad talked to was above all a determination continued on page 7
Notes From Away: Direct Democracy II

By Tom Lamia

“Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive!”

As I mulled over what tack I might take in again addressing the institution of direct democracy (see Notes From Away: Let the People Decide, February 2022), the quoted words came to me from somewhere in my past. The essence of it was right and Shakespeare was in my head as the author. My knowledge of Shakespeare is sketchy (I took a one semester survey course in college) and snippets from the eight or nine plays covered do sometimes crowd into my thoughts. I did a Google search for “Oh, what a web . . .” and nothing more was needed to trigger the above quote. But, to my surprise it was Sir Walter Scott, not Shakespeare, who was the author. Further research was clarifying: the quote is generally thought to be from Shakespeare because it is so true and fitting, a venerable, pithy and precise aphorism of the pitfalls of lying. These are strengths of Shakespeare, whose plays remain popular after 400 years. Scott, unfortunately, is now lightly read, if at all, despite being nearer to us in time (the quote is from an 1808 poem, ‘Marmion’).

Being wrong about the source of the quote makes a relevant point in the story of direct democracy that I now offer in further description of its perils. The story comes from Maine and is continuing toward an outcome that is so convoluted and uncertain that no good result should be expected.

As I said in last month’s installment, the process of direct democracy can be complex, costly and dangerous for those who venture to use it. A news report in the Portland Press Herald’s February 7 edition, illustrates the point.

School boards, parents, state and local government bodies, and the courts have been in the political news everywhere it seems. The conflicts have been combative and unsatisfying to all participants. Battles are being fought over books, COVID mitigation measures, courses, teachers, coaches, bussing and other issues. Often there are more than two sides to these issues and, just as often, more than two bodies who claim decisional rights.

Maine’s sixteen counties each embody smaller administrative units of governance. These include Regional School Units (RSUs), districts that govern school issues within a geographical area. Those geographical areas can include several municipalities and parts of municipalities.

A school board governs each RSU. The residents of each municipality within its boundaries elect school board members. RSU 21 oversees schools in Kennebunk, Kennebunkport and Arundel—all in York County in Maine’s southeastern corner. RSU 21 has eleven elected board members, five from Kennebunk, and three each from Arundel and Kennebunkport.

As one might expect in these turbulent times, some residents were unhappy with the board and began a recall process against two board members, the chairman and one other. Signatures needed for a recall vote to be held fell short for the chairman, but were enough to hold a vote on the board member. To block the vote, the board went to court seeking an emergency injunction. The court rejected the injunction on the ground that the true party in interest in the case was the board itself and not the residents who initiated the recall process. As the board could not show an irreparable injury the injunction was not granted and the recall process continues.

Those are the facts that illustrate the first few inches of a legal morass that has made a small problem a tangle of community-destroying issues.

The recall process was started as a method for concerned residents to confront and disempower an elected board. Why was that necessary? If my reading of this is correct, the answer is shameful. The residents initiating the recall believed that they had no alternative beyond lobbying their elected representatives (the board members) to take action to deal with “teacher and human resources” issues. The true issues now appear to be the desire of the initiating residents to have a board member recalled for reasons that may be homophobic and to have a reconstituted board remove the only African-American school superintendent in Maine.

Now residents not responsible for initiating the recall and town officials are supporting the board in its effort to stop the recall. They argue (1) that the recall process does not apply to board members, (2) that the recall petition does not contain a verifiable basis for the recall, (3) that the board members are elected by the towns (and not by the district as a whole) and are accountable only to the towns. Contemporaneously the recall initiators are complaining of being unfairly attacked as being motivated by improper motives and the board is arguing that the entire process is divisive and unfair because no grounds for the recall are cited or required. What a mess.

The subtext is that letters in support for the recall have argued that the board’s focus on “DEI” (diversity, equity and inclusion) after “racist incidents” were reported to the board was misplaced, unnecessary and divisive. The backers of this DEI Initiative appear to be the targets of those who initiated the recall. The chair of the school board has said that it is the recall process that is divisive and unfair because it allows unfounded charges to be made against community members with no opportunity for those members to respond. “It does not protect a community member from personal dislike by other community members or from racism or sexual orientation or gender discrimination.” The ultimate objective is to remove the school superintendent as “unfit to lead.”

A letter seeking support for the recall says the list of reasons is long and “something personal for each of us.” But the bottom line is this: after a year of [the superintendent] it is clear that she is unfit . . . and not being held into account . . . It is time to take the only step we the voters have [to] remove the . . . board leaders from office and replace them with people who will do the one job they were elected to do: manage—and possibly replace—the superintendent.

The leader of the recall effort says that the claims of motivation by racism or homophobia are “reprehensible and lazy.” The recall efforts, they say, are to deal with a “failing board and have nothing to do with the fact the superintendent is Black or that one of the [board members] we’re recalling is gay.”

With that, the process heads to a vote on March 29. Nomination papers for a replacement member were due on February 11. This story illustrates in a modest way that direct democracy can be a blunt and mishandled instrument for governing school board disputes.

Holocaust continued from page 6 to “look forward not back,” to reference the hollow phraseology Democrats have been far too eager to apply when confronting the wreckage of first the Bush and now the Trump administrations.

Dad looked at the law from every angle—as witness on the ground, as attorney in the U.S. Navy, as a private practitioner, as a pro-bono resource for friends and family, as an author, as a professor. My gorges rises in anxiety and anger as I read the twelve bullet points of comparison Dad drew up between the Nazis and Bush and his Neocons. In the final years of his life, Dad and I talked innumerable times about the even greater threat posed by Trump.

Dad—mostly—believed that Americans had enough common sense to ultimately reject submission to a crazed dictator. He lived to see Biden elected. A few days before January 6, 2021, he didn’t want to believe it when I told him that I’d read something disruptive was being planned for that day. Despite that catalysis, he was reassured as he watched Biden’s inauguration, only a few days before he fell and was admitted to the hospital.

He loved Lady Gaga’s rendition of the National Anthem. But as always, his optimism—and sometimes wishful thinking—were informed by his experience of the cycles of history and the lessons of the past.

He and I agreed: for democracy to survive, those lessons must be taught perpetually.
The Quarry
By Jeff Hodges

In 2017 I shot a documentary about an 18th-century marble quarry in western Massachusetts. As teenagers my friends and I had frolicked in the quarry, diving from the high walls into the frigid water, unmindful of the number of fatalities that had occurred there over the years. This was something the town fathers never forgave nor forgot.

At some point the quarry was purchased by a local resident, who, like a lot of folks in town, had descended from the Italian miners who emigrated from Carrara to quarry the marble that was used for the construction of the Capitol Building and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Eventually he deeded the quarry to his nephew Chicky, who became the heart and soul of the place. Chicky and his wife Sissy tried to turn the quarry into a revenue-generating resource, primarily as a recreational, educational, and historical venue, but even at one point ferrying leftover marble out on a crude tramway. The town fought them relentlessly, with ordinances, zoning changes, and summonses.

One afternoon I was revisiting the quarry—I hadn't been there for over 40 years—when an old pickup pulled in with two guys in the front seat. There was a pit bull in the bed of the truck; it flew out and pinned me up against a tree while the guys looked me over. Then a little red car appeared and Sissy stepped out and hollered, "Jeff Hodges! Where the hell have you been?"

The dog wagged his tail, the guys gave me the glad hand, and Sissy and I sat down to catch up. When she told me about her troubles with the town, we decided to see if a documentary about the quarry might help highlight its historical value.

After a year or so our film was completed, and around that time Sissy and the quarry were invited by the Massachusetts Historical Society to be included in the prestigious Massachusetts Archeology Month. Suddenly, the town fathers began to view the quarry as an historical asset instead of an attractive nuisance.

Tragically, the quarry claimed Chicky as its most unjustifiable victim. He disappeared one night while camping out with a friend. When he failed to turn up the next morning a search was initiated. On the second day of the search Chicky was found in the water, at the back end of the quarry, with a broken neck.

He'd been gone for a year when I sat down with Sissy at the quarry. She told me she had spent most of the year wondering how Chicky ended up in the water. Her bafflement and lack of closure were making it difficult for her to move on with her life. One day, one of her neighbors showed up at her door with two sisters who asked if they could come in. The sisters were psychics, and after some small talk they said to Sissy, "OK, let's get started."

"Would you like to try?" asked the first lady. "OK, let's try it."

"I'm a dumbass!" was Chicky's signature expression for screwing up; the "Woo Woo!" is self-explanatory; Bill was a local gossip that had been spreading the rumor that Chicky had been a victim of foul play.

Sissy got the answers she needed. And she'll always know that Chicky's amazing spirit will be watching over her and his beloved marble quarry.

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The Pluck O’ the Irish

The Author at White Horse Tavern, St. Patrick’s Day 2019. Photo courtesy of Kieran Loughney.

By Kieran Patrick Loughney

As the harsh winter loosened its icy grip at the Catholic school I attended as a child in New England, the runup to St. Patrick’s Day would begin in earnest. We kids were tasked with tracing mimeographed shamrock shapes onto green construction paper and cutting them out with dull scissors. Dozens of these would decorate our classroom where we’d be taught songs such as When Irish Eyes are Smiling and It’s a Great Day for the Irish. My classmates were primarily not of Irish descent. Nevertheless, on March 17th we’d all be dressed in green.

I’d come to learn much later that The Sisters of Mercy, an order which originated in Dublin, were sharing an American version of Irish culture. I’d also learn that before the 1970s, pubs in Ireland would close on St. Patrick’s Day, and the Irish would mark the occasion by attending church. St. Patrick, despite the folklore, did not drive snakes from Ireland—there were none there to begin with. The songs the sisters taught us had little association with traditional Irish music. Irish Eyes was written by an Ohio native and the one proclaiming A Great Day for the Irish was penned for a Judy Garland movie.

The ersatz Irishness of things would become a curious phenomenon in movies such as the diddly-eye Irish cliche fest of Disney’s Darby O’Gill and the Little People, and in TV ads for Irish Spring soap and Lucky Charms cereal with the chuckling leprechaun. The stepdancing on steroids of Michael Flatley’s shirtless appropriation of Irish tradition, Riverdance, may be the most flamboyant example. I’m not offended by a little cinematic shorthand to depict ethnicity, nor am I easily upset by blatant stereotypical depictions of my forebears or even modernizing traditional music or dance. (The folk-punk band The Pogues thrill me with their snotty rock versions of Irish traditional music.) Still, an authentic and historically accurate representation of my heritage is always welcome.

In the colorful history of the West Village, The White Horse Tavern remains a monument to the large wave of Irish immigration that reached these shores more than a century ago. The saloon, the second oldest in New York City (only McSorley’s is older), according to Village Preservation, was a gathering place for immigrant longshoremen, artists, and writers. The three Clancy Brothers, struggling actors from Tipperary, were regulars at the White Horse in the early 1960s, enjoying pints of beer and singing songs passed down from their ancestors back home. Together with their friend Tommy Makem, they’d soon be performing at Carnegie Hall and be invited to the White House by President Kennedy, forever marking the White Horse Tavern as the place where traditional Irish music first entered mainstream American culture.

At my own annual St. Patrick’s Day party in my former home in Scranton PA in the early 1990s, a guest, noticing my extensive music collection and hearing the non-stop Irish music being played that day, invited me to host a radio show at a station he owned. I accepted and began an immersion in all things genuinely Irish. Over the next three years I’d learn more about Irish history, storytelling, music, and dance than I ever had, presenting a program of traditional music and interviews with musicians, authors, and historians. Although I’m thoroughly American, my ancestors having arrived three generations ago, I had discovered and was eager to share the rich heritage established by my people long before I was born.

At the dawn of personal computing, my father fired up his primitive Radio Shack desktop and began a genealogical examination of our family roots. His research confirmed that our forebears had indeed all come from Ireland. While hardly a surprise to us, it helped to fuel my desire to one day visit Ireland. Many years later, I pulled out of a hotel parking lot west of Dublin and, determined not to consult a map, followed a rural road amid the meadows of the Wicklow Mountains. Coming upon ancient stone ruins, I pulled over and eavesdropped on a tour group in progress. The guide described the sixth-century stone church built by St. Kevin (my twin brother’s name is Kevin). I walked away as he continued his lecture, but thought I heard my own name mentioned. I circled back some time later. Finding him in an adjacent set of ruins, I asked the guide if he had mentioned the name Kieran. “I did indeed, sir,” he replied. “You’re standing on the ruins of St. Kieran’s Church right now.”
A Defense of Elon Musk, the World’s Most Cryptic Billionaire

By Anastasia Kaliabakos

All of my grandparents came to the United States in the 1970s, hoping to have a better life than the one they had been afforded in Greece. Growing up, I thought that both of my grandfathers were the epitome of the elusive “American Dream” that everyone always talks about. My grandfather on my mother’s side studied to become a doctor in Italy, and upon moving to America, became a taxi driver and ran a hot dog cart. Both of my grandfathers weathered unforeseeable circumstances and obstacles in order to achieve their successes, and I owe the life that I am able to have to their hard work. However, both of them acknowledge that although life is as an immigrant is not at all easy, it is definitely helpful to live in a country like America, where the concept of the American Dream is not just a dream, but a reality.

I am fortunate to have people I am close to that I can look at as role models for my life and who have inspired me every day. My grandparents are the epitome of the elusive “American Dream,” and I owe the hard work, not only long day shifts, but through the nights as well, all while trying to learn English and supporting my grandmother in raising their two young children. My grandfather on my father’s side was a soccer player back in Greece, and upon moving to America, became a taxi driver and ran a hot dog cart. Both of my grandfathers had dreams of bettering their lives and achieving success, and I owe the life that I am able to have to their hard work.

Thinking back on my grandparents, I have realized that they are the epitome of the American Dream, and I owe the life that I am able to have to their hard work. However, both of them acknowledge that although life as an immigrant is not at all easy, it is definitely helpful to live in a country like America, where the concept of the American Dream is not just a dream, but a reality.

One of LLS’ other projects under construction is the Steven A. Cohen mansionpenthouse of industrial-type metal windows forming a continuous ‘greenhouse’ look, with the Flemish bond brickwork and windows restored on facades. But then Winter Properties’ David Winter and David Millstone bought the property for $985M in 2018. While typical new residential work includes some commercial space at the storefronts, this corner property started work in late 2019 for strictly residential use.

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775 Washington St. and W. 12th St.

This former two-story parking garage and commercial structure, ca. 1924, at 775 Washington Street aka 371 West 12th Street, is undergoing major alterations that eliminate the truck ramps, and give it new layouts for a three-family luxury redevelopment. The property site is 21,170 square feet, and includes 21,170 square feet of unused development rights.

Its illustrious history includes times as a Gulf gas station in the 50’s and 60’s, a Rolls-Royce service garage in the 1980’s, and the Barbuto Restaurant in the 2010’s (which moved over to Horatio Street just as the pandemic closed restaurants).

Previously in 2017, BSK Architects with Higgins Quasebarth & Partners LLC had gotten LPC approval for a commercial use project. The LPC records show a new penthouse of industrial-type metal windows forming a continuous ‘greenhouse’ look, with the Flemish bond brickwork and windows restored on facades.

But then Winter Properties’ David Winter and David Millstone bought the property for $985M in 2018. While typical new residential work includes some commercial space at the storefronts, this corner property started work in late 2019 for strictly residential use on 4 floors and an enlarged cellar. Work has proceeded for many months under the new owners, but the LPC hasn’t approved the new designs, and the architect’s website does not yet show any designs for the site (as of this writing). There appears to be a new courtyard being carved out of the center of the building, and work continues on the facade Flemish bond brickwork and windows.

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WestView Really Needs You...

It is hard to believe but WestView will soon be entering its twentieth year!
Every once in a while I pick up an old issue and read it as if I am seeing it for the first time and I find myself saying “This is a great paper”. And then I have to remind myself that it is a great paper because of a loyal band of very good even brilliant article writers and a very loyal and very skilled group of staffers. We are always ready to receive a new article and right now we really need replacement staffers and that could be you!

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2. Ad sales—we need somebody who will call or visit a new business and offer them a news item about their opening and accept their ad.
3. We need copy editors.
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5. We need reporters who will interview the newsmakers and write.
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Perfect Little Rectangles

By Paul H. Wegner

In the last several years of her life—her dementia worsening—my mother became an indefatigable hoarder, as if the compulsive collection of physical items might somehow serve as a final, desperate blockade against the inexorable splintering of her mind. One weekend my brother and I were tasked with clearing out a former bedroom that had become so unmanageable that the door couldn’t even be pushed closed to hide the chaos. I sifted through the piles slowly, sparing random items from the shredder, like the pay stub from 1967, back when my parents lived on Jane Street and my mother worked at nearby St. Vincent’s Hospital (where she would become head OR nurse and stay for over 30 years until retirement). My brother, meanwhile, joked about our family archaeological dig while quickly and deftly extracting precious family photographs interspersed in various strata of the jumble.

Suddenly, I came across a repurposed old shoebox from Bamberger’s, the contents of which rendered me unable to continue. Hundreds and hundreds of recipes, many annotated with my mom’s distinctive curursive, meticulously clipped and carefully ordered into small yellowing stacks. I don’t know why this affected me more than the discovery of my father’s baby book from 1930 or my second-grade story about a superhero whose powers included flight, invisibility and “being good at gym.” Maybe it was because I had anticipated her saving and our finding those types of keepsakes. Maybe it was the thought of plans unfulfilled and time unspent together. Maybe it was just the culmination of a difficult day. All I know is, I kept one of those clipings, too.

Paul H. Wegner is a resident of Charles Street, husband to a wonderful and talented wife who he hopes will resume her acting career, father to a high-energy, gregarious tween daughter and to the young cat she rescued.
Joan's Shanghai

By Joan Klyhn

Joan’s Shanghai is a memoir of a childhood in Shanghai in the ‘30s and ‘40s of the 20th century. I am primarily writing it for myself, extending it to my friends, and now to the many people who have shown themselves fascinated with this period in the past.

Internment, by Phyllis

Jack and I, and our 5 year old son, John, were tagged and housed together in a cubicle room at Yu Yuen camp. We shared our hut with the Currie family. The Japanese found out that John Currie was an amateur radio enthusiast and ordered him to repair their radio sets. All of ours had been confiscated, of course. While John was repairing their equipment, he gradually stole enough parts to build a short wave receiver. A Chinese member of the Shanghai constabulary smuggled in the valve for the set, and a wire curtain rod was used as an aerial. The wheels were milk can tops. John was able to build the radio set into a small framework, which when closed would appear to be a child's toy truck. My son and the Currie daughter played with the truck on the porch of our hut, right in front of the Japanese guards. In the evening, we posted the kids outside the hut to watch for approaching guards. Meanwhile, I kept the set inside and took down, in shorthand, the 6 pm news from General MacArthur's headquarters in Australia. I'd transcribe them into longhand and circulate the bulletins among the internees. The Japanese were suspicious, of course, and constantly searched, inspected and counted everyone.

They would turn all lights off for days, leaving us in total darkness. Was I afraid for myself and my family? Sure, I was petrified as I watched my boy walking around with his truck. But we did what we did to survive with dignity. We organized schools, sick bays, sanitation and entertainment. We even had a piano until one night a Japanese guard interrupted our concert by unsheathing his sword and slicing through the piano chords. But we kept on with our music; someone had a harmonica!

We were obsessed with food, or rather, the lack of it. The Red Cross sent us packages, but we rarely got them. When there was a measles epidemic at the camp, the Japanese commandant issued each child one egg. Some weevily rice appeared now and then, and we knew we had to consume the bugs for protein. Any valuables we had, we traded with Chinese outside the camp, which was only sealed against our escape. Items could be passed back and forth, including parcels from friends and relatives on the outside. My sister, Di, could always be counted on for unusual concoctions; she had the best of intentions. We soaked and ground up soybeans and corn used for animal feed; we could buy sacks of these cheaply. The soybeans we turned into milk, high in protein, and the corn into a mush, not worth recollecting.

The human body can stand an awful lot, we learned that. I don't think anything else that could happen to me now would bother me because we hit rock bottom then. When you are cold, hungry, and in the dark, not much else could happen to frighten you.

We heard later that my brother, Ed, only twenty when he went into a different camp, in Pootung, had kitchen detail and was put in charge of keeping the fire going for cooking. Ed was always ready for fun and high jinks, and secretly paid the coal guy to smuggle a bottle of cognac in the coal. Probably not that often! We also heard, sadly, that the Japanese closed down the popular Canidrome, and slaughtered the greyhounds for food. Ed managed to get some of that meat for his group. Tough and stringy as it was, he claimed it tasted a lot better than the rats he used to trap. Crisp fried cockroaches were a tasty snack, rich in protein.

We all suffered from malnutrition when we got out of camp. The American forces showered us with K rations, which included milk powder, canned butter, processed cheese, Spam and Hershey bars, and best of all, cigarettes, which we hadn't seen in years. We gorged ourselves at first and got quite sick until we learned to pace ourselves.

Our prerewar servants, Hern Ling, our son's baby nurse, and her husband Bing Sung, previously our handyman, who later became a construction foreman, met us at the gate of the internment camp as soon as it opened. They immediately took care of us. They cleaned our filthy, emptied out apartment, washed our clothes, cooked our food, did our shopping, etc. We were a pathetic, sickly family at first.

They were at the wharf to see us off when we left Shanghai soon after for Sydney, Australia on the AMS Reaper. This began our circuitous journey through three continents. We were all in tears. We had no money to give Hern Ling and Bing Sung, as we only had twenty dollars to our name. We never saw them again.

Village Diary: Westbeth, Ben, and Beyond

By Pago Habitan's*

On an unusually warm winter morning I headed out for a walk along the Hudson River esplanade. Approaching Bank Street, I saw a small group gathered around a tall statue of Alexander Graham Bell. I quickly realized, my elusive friend Brother Ben.

As Ben led the group across West Street, I continued my walk along the river. I hoped I would have a chance at some point to ask him about the group and his lecture. That opportunity presented itself a few hours later.

I had just ordered lunch at the Bus Stop Cafe when Ben swept in the door. Shedding the camelhair car coat he wears over a black cassock, he sat down across from me. "They were a mixed group," he answered, before I could pose my question. "Students of science as well as a poet, some musicians, a choreographer, and two or three devotees of various religious persuasions—all sorts of inquiring minds and imaginations."

Before I could ask how he came to be speaking to them, Ben again answered, "Well, Pago, you know very well that the Village is famous as the great American Bohemia, a place for writers, artists, and revolutionaries. But its legacy is even richer and more comprehensive." I nodded for him to continue.

"Before it became housing for artists, the building we now call Westbeth was, for nearly a century, a pioneering research facility, first for Western Electric and then for Bell Laboratories."

Brother Ben went on to list the inventive accomplishments of the men and women who worked in that pleasing and adaptable edifice.

"Just think of it, Pago! Radio. Radar. Television. Talking Films. Transistors. Telephones. But even more consequential and profound: wave theory, as the key to quantum mechanics, was verified in that temple of technology in the 1920s."

I felt as if one of those theoretical waves had washed over me. I asked Ben to help me even begin to understand the significance of wave theory and quantum mechanics.

"We must leave scientific definition to the physicists, but what I find exciting about the whole business is that quantum affirms the dynamic complexity of what we think of as the material world. There's more to it than meets the eye, Pago. The cosmos is fluid, unfolding, and full of surprises. Of course, this comes as no surprise to some of us."

At that point lunch arrived. Helping himself to my French fries, Ben had another thought. "In the spirit of imagination, experimentation, and invention, a number of us are going to celebrate Alexander Graham Bell's birthday on March 14th. You might want to join us." When I asked what time and where, Ben paused and then said, "I have to phone you."

I paid the bill and we went our separate but quantum ways.

* "Village Resident," otherwise known as T. P. Miller.
Superb Owl Sunday

By Keith Michael

Walking down Perry Street yesterday morning felt like spring. At the corner of Bleecker Street, a male Cardinal was singing his come-lather rhapsodies while four and twenty American Robins were hosting a celebratory breakfast above in a Chinese Scholar Tree. The black beans rained down, likely a bane for those hoping to keep their sidewalks swept. The melodious chortle of the Robins made it seem like they had plenty to gossip about after their winter travels.

Today might as well be a different place, a different year, a different season. It’s a blizzard. Thick snow is flying horizontally and already piling up on the tops of branches. I’ve ventured out to try to capture the wintry scene, but juggling an umbrella to keep snow off the camera lens is tamping down the magic.

Nevertheless, I’m headed up to Central Park. There may be no more iconic winter vista in NYC than catching snow on the intricately twisty branches of the great American Elms lining the Mall. This is what the cliché “winter wonderland” was penned to describe. The wind has fallen off so the effect now is more like settling inside a snow globe. I’m not the only one who had the idea to come here today. A gang of crows calling, heading north, adds to the general bonhomie of New Yorkers reveling in a snowy weekend afternoon.

Bethesda Terrace and Fountain are selfie-magnets. Remember when people remembered things rather than photographed themselves to remember? Likewise, Bow Bridge and the edge of the Lake are lined with people documenting today for later. I hope they’re enjoying it now too. I am. Hundreds of Canada Geese are descending onto the Lake, loudly honking, then splashing into the newly unfrozen water. What a spectacle!

My true destination on this Superb Owl Sunday is the North Woods, so I catch the C train to 103rd Street. I’d hoped to try Breezy Point, Queens again today after my foiled attempts to track down a Snowy Owl there that I wrote about last month. But even I convinced myself that a walk on a barrier beach during a blizzard might not be the wisest choice for the day.

I am still without an owl sighting for the winter. Oh, I’ve tried—three times to north Manhattan’s Inwood Hill Park, twice to Pelham Bay Park in The Bronx, once to Shirley Chisholm State Park in Brooklyn, once to Staten Island’s Clove Lakes Park and twice to Mount Loretto Unique Area, once each to Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge and Alley Pond Park in Queens—all places that owls have regularly been seen this season, though not by me. Regularly I’ve even checked out the pine trees in Hudson River Park, hoping that an owl has spent a layover there. Nope. A Great Horned Owl has been seen over the past several weeks in the Loch and Ravine of the North Woods. Of course, I’ve already tried twice, seeing consolation A-list birds like a Great Blue Heron and a drake Wood Duck. But, again, no owl. Maybe the third time’s the charm.

Almost immediately upon walking into the Currier and Ives lithograph of the Olmsted and Vaux landscape around the Pool, a couple is walking toward me with those tell-tale birder accoutrements: binoculars. With a nod toward MY binoculars, I greet them, “Have you, by any chance, seen the owl?”

“Yes! Just head through the Arch, keep to the left over the wooden bridge. You’ll see the crowd. Good luck.”

With an over-the-shoulder, “Thank you SO much!” I try to control breaking into a trot. Barely glancing at the boisterous waterfall into the Loch or passing to marvel at the stone-masonry of the Glen Span Arch framing the Adirondack-inspired fantasyland beyond, I’m nearly skipping as I turn left over the rustic bridge. Up the hill is The Crowd—twenty or so like-minded aficionados with binoculars and cameras with 1-o-n-g lenses—all peering upward. Discreetly, I don’t ask, “Where’s the owl?” but wait for my eyes to absorb the collective gaze, and hold my breath as, “Ah, THERE’S the owl!”

If you’ve never seen a Great Horned Owl, they’re huge—nearly two feet tall and can have a wingspan approaching five feet. Though with their tawny brown feathers, orange face, tidy white collar, and, yes, prominent feather tufts on their heads that look like horns, they can be remarkably camouflaged right out in the open. Many passerbys ask, “What are you all looking at?” Even when directly pointing to the celebrity owl, it frequently takes them a while to find it. Owls primarily hunt at night and during the day they’re just trying to be invisible and sleep. We’re probably not helping that pursuit. Additionally, in the hour that I’m there, several Blue Jays raise a ruckus, a bevy of crows send out the alarm (maybe that same gang I saw earlier flying north,) and most dramatically, a Cooper’s Hawk stokes out a nearby branch, metronomically marking time with its kek kek kek scream. There goes the neighborhood.

The owl occasionally opens her golden eyes and swivels her head at the pandemonium but then ruffles her feathers, settling down for a long winter’s nap. A Superb Owl Sunday, indeed.

PS: The next Sunday I finally saw a Snowy Owl too!

Visit keithmichaelny.com or follow @newyorkcitywild on Instagram.

The Changing Earth: Monotypes by Claire Rosenfeld

Opening: Tuesday, April 5, 6-8PM
Revelation Gallery
224 Waverly Place
April 5-28, 2022
Hours: Monday-Thursday, 11AM-3PM (Closed April 14 and 18)

Claire Rosenfeld is a New York City-based visual artist working in painting and experimental printmaking. Her work is figurative expressionist, utilizing imagery that moves between figuration and abstraction. Ms. Rosenfeld has exhibited her work nationally and internationally in solo and group shows.
COVID in Dubai
By Kambiz Shekdar, Ph.D.

I was in United Arab Emirates for just under two weeks last month. 95% of the population of 10 million is vaccinated, 700,000 people a day take a PCR test that come back within five hours or faster, and everyone still wears masks outdoors to avoid steep US $800 fines.

At first I felt this was all a little excessive. I had three PCR tests for results fresh enough to gain access to the places I wanted to visit. But none of this was an ordeal—no lines or closed waiting rooms with people who are obviously sick like we have here.

Large PCR testing sites are set up in key locations throughout the city. Large employers like Dubai EXPO 2020, the World EXPO, have their own sites, one for employees and one for visitors.

Enter one, and several of 20 attendants sitting at their stations are immediately ready to receive you. Present your ID and contact info. As a foreigner I had to pay full price—$40—but through various arrangements, including through the government and work, locals test free.

Next up, move onto the row of private testing booths. My only complaint is that they jab the swabs a little further than they do here, but a minor inconvenience for the public good. There are also active by testing sites if you prefer. No matter what, a 10-minute wait later, you’re done.

The UAE government also brought the population along with them, where people are in this together. There has been a failure of our leadership in this country, resulting in making a pandemic political war.

In my two weeks of meetings and greetings and dinners and outings in Dubai, I did not get sick. No one of the dozens of people I met once talked about getting sick—because it is such a rare occurrence there. I’ve been back for one week, and now I’m sick, and so many friends are too or just got better.

EXPO 2020 PCR TESTING SITE for employees in Dubai. Photo by American Photographer living in Dubai, Franciszek (Frankie) Tarnow-Bulatowicz. For more shots of Dubai by Frankie, go to https://www.artofengagement.net/.

If the world was being infected by a global pandemic, how do you think we should handle it? Dubai knows how to handle the COVID epidemic.

Rockefeller University alumnus and biotech inventor Kambiz Shekdar, Ph.D., is the president of Research Foundation to Cure AIDS and Science & LGBTQ editor at WestView News. To support RFTCA, go to https://rftca.org/.

A Lesson in Hope
By Kieran Loughney

"Such is hope, heaven's own gift to struggling mortals; pervading, like some subtle essence from the skies, all things, both good and bad; as universal as death, and more infectious than disease."—Charles Dickens

Two years into this blasted pandemic, essentials are in short supply—such as health care workers, hospital beds, a unified purpose as a country, the oatmeal at Trader Joe’s. Most lacking, though, is a sense of hope. An episode from my work in child welfare, pre-pandemic, showed me what a powerful virtue hope is.

I saw this play out among three children in foster care who had little reason to be hopeful. A particular day stands out in my memory. Eve, buckled in the back seat belted out “There’s No Business, Like Show Business,” the seven-year-old selling the lyrics with all the wit and sass of Ethel Merman herself. After having picked up her four-year-old brother Jimmy at his daycare facility, I’d picked up Eve and her eight-year-old sister Jane at their school. (These are not the actual names of the children.) We were on our way to visit their father.

“Wow, Eve, you crushed it.” I raved. Jane, nearly her younger sister’s twin physically, with an exaggerated eyecroll I caught in the rearview mirror, sighed, “Yep she’s amazing. Can we hear some Michael Jackson now?” We drove on through a snowy squall as the three siblings sang along to “Billie Jean” on the stereo, the kids sharing the refrain, Bob Marley sings, “Don’t worry ‘bout a thing, every little thing’s gonna be alright.”

Three Little Birds played softly as we headed to the foster home that day, a song I cannot help but associate with these remarkably resilient and courageous children. In the refrain, Bob Marley sings, “Don’t worry ‘bout a thing, every little thing’s gonna be alright.” Jane’s optimism was well-founded. The family would indeed be reunited within a year, just before the pandemic struck. We should all be guided by the hope these kids instinctively demonstrated.
It’s rare to find someone who has lived in the West Village their whole life.

As a lifelong resident of Waverly Place, no one can express the value of living in the most coveted neighborhood in the city like I can. You know the magic of the village, and all it has to offer. You live in the greatest place in the city and need someone to appreciate it the same way you do!

From one West Village icon to another, if you have questions regarding your most valued asset, feel free to reach out to me and we can chat over coffee at Ye Waverly Inn.
We live within a dynamic energetic grid. Natural parts of this grid are nourishing like solar energy, which we are familiar with, and negative ions from nature, which we are just now learning to appreciate.

Humans, as part of nature, are also bioelectric, designed to have an energetic inter-relationship with the earth. The earth's nourishing energies, absorbed through breathing, eating, drinking, and being in nature, are part of a feedback loop within the earth's ecosystem.

As studies prove that being in nature enhances our vital life force and helps heal stress, insomnia, inflammation, pain, and other ailments, parks are more than grass and gardens, especially parks in districts with very little nature—like ours. With all the neighborhood's new residences, the lack of natural areas is critical, as was witnessed during the pandemic's shutdown.

Also, the Connected Kids report data shows that in 2014, children spent six hours a day in screen-time. Since the pandemic this has increased dramatically. Today's children, living in their devices, are completely divorced from the natural world. City kids are affected the most as they are rarely around trees or real grass. At the same time, we are witnessing a spike in nature deficiency syndrome, including attention deficit disorders.

The simple solution: let children get dirty. Playing outside in natural areas helps children (and us) become stronger, smarter, more resilient, and creative. This does not happen on plastic grass that insulates us from the earth. Nature cannot be made with plastic.

Climbing is an important stage in the development of children's motor skills, upper body strength, coordination, and problem solving. Physical activity outdoors is even more important now that many schools no longer have gym classes. For a child, climbing a tree is a creative adventure. Free play in nature spurs a child to discover their imagination's unique and grounded creative self.

But it is hard to find a truly natural area in the overly manicured neighborhood ours has become. Also, in our gloriously developed West Village, far from our history of being a down-to-earth “village,” most residents now live in the sky.

I watched four girls playing. Each took turns climbing up the base of a metal lamp post. That a child climbing a tree is a ticket-able offense is a sign of how far we have strayed from what is natural and how to support child development in the healthiest way.

Climbing a tree in a natural play area has more benefits than climbing a jungle gym. Children could be nourished and healed by the earth's vital life force in a “play garden” by using more natural surfaces and environs. If trees can be cut to discourage climbing, they can also be chosen and shaped to provide safe climbing. Doctors are beginning to prescribe nature. Providing clean grass and dirt (and mud) for getting dirty would be a step in the right direction.

The West Village has one last opportunity to create more park space. Just as Washington Square was made into a wonderful park by closing off lower Fifth Avenue, if the western half of Clarkson Street was turned into parkland, along with the water tunnel site, adding them to the footprint of JJ Walker Park just north of Clarkson Street, there would be enough land for a children's garden as well as a multi-use field like the one we used to enjoy at this park.

Considering that the Tony Dapolito Recreation Center across the street is being reassessed for its renovation, and there is a school right next door to this site and people are always complaining about not having school grounds/yards/fields, there should be a moratorium on building on/destructing any open space that could be used for a park until we figure out how to make the most of what is left of the Village. We need more park space here—more of mother nature’s life-giving energy grid, especially for children.
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It’s Healthy to Talk to Yourself!

By Dana Jean Costantino

Have you ever wondered if it’s OK to talk to yourself out loud, to hear your voice rather than just have your thoughts wander around in your head? I certainly have.

I find myself speaking out loud to myself quite often. Moving through moments, seeking my own advice, processing work-related issues, health-related issues, social issues, environmental issues, and day-to-day life issues, out loud verbally to myself.

I began to wonder, is it healthy to talk to yourself out loud? Is that a strange habit? After lots of research, I have come to find out that talking to yourself out loud rather than just silently having thoughts in your head is quite healthy and encouraged.

It turns out that speaking out loud helps us to process things better, faster, with more awareness, and it also allows us the space to move through the process in a way that feels comforting. Much like dancing while no one is watching, talking out loud to yourself while you are alone can have the same effect. Not only will you find yourself getting to solutions quicker, calming yourself down, and having an overall sense of clarity, but it’s even possible to learn something about yourself that you didn’t know before.

Bottom line, don’t hold it all in and don’t wait for an audience. As it turns out, you are your very best audience. The answers are much closer than you think. Incidentally, hearing one’s own voice in a space where you are alone can also help you with your tone and pace and in turn make you a better, more confident speaker when you do have an audience.

So, today when you have a thought buzzing around in your brain like a bumble bee, try verbalizing it to yourself, say the words out loud and see if you can talk yourself through a solution.

We so often are told that the answer lies within ourselves, it just may be that it does, but you may need to talk it out of yourself first.

I hope your next chats with yourselves get you motivated and refreshed. Think of it this way, sometimes you need to release yourself out loud. Is it healthy to talk to yourself out loud? Is that a strange habit? Right now, a differently structured plan to privatize Medicare in New York City is in the works. 250,000 municipal retirees are set to lose their traditional Medicare coverage on April 1st, and unless they opt out of this arrangement—and pay a new monthly premium of $191.57, which is really a penalty for not going along with the city’s plan—they will be scooped up into a plan called Medicare Advantage Plus. This will be run by two private insurance companies: Alliance Health or BlueCross BlueShield Retiree Solutions, and Emblem Health. Like any other private insurance companies, these will keep their eyes on their profit margins, not on patient care, despite all their reassurances of providing quality care. There are even some perks added: a SilverSneakers fitness program, 24 one-way nonemergency medical-related trips a year, and up to 56 meals per year for those with chronic conditions or post-patient discharge (up to $14 meals per qualifying event, for a total of four such events per year).

In the insurance industry a payment of any claim is considered a loss. Besides the fact that for-profit insurance is based on spending as little as possible for care, which means that some claims are likely to be denied when insurance companies can get away with it, the first signs of trouble are that many treatments will require preauthorization, and doctor visits to any practitioner not a member’s primary care physician will require a $15 copay. Another problem is that not all doctors or hospitals participate with Medicare Advantage plans.

Why is privatized Medicare so attractive to local and national governments? Supposedly it saves federal taxpayers money; the city claims it will save over $600 million annually. The privatization conversion was worked out during a secret meeting of the Municipal Labor Committee, a group of unions representing city employees and retirees, and former Mayor de Blasio. The rank-and-file members knew about none of it. A majority of the union leaders, numbering around 100, approved the plan, with only five unions voting against it. The unions committed to $1.3 billion in annual healthcare savings, and in return they were promised pay raises for members. Medicare Advantage plans have a system of coding to make their enrollees look sicker than they are, triggering higher federal payments for the plans. This does not mean that all of that money will be spent on health care—private insurance companies are trying to take care of their CEOs and stockholders.

Wall Street has power and appeal to politicians who look for financial support and endorsements, and the big question is: exactly how will this arrangement save federal money? In 2019, for instance, the federal government spent $321 more per person on Medicare Advantage enrollees than those in traditional Medicare. In addition to the coding system changes, Medicare Advantage plans cover the cost of vision, dental, and hearing coverage, which traditional Medicare is not allowed to do; this encourages retirees to choose Medicare Advantage plans. Traditional Medicare should be allowed to cover those benefits.

A lawsuit has been filed to stop the New York City retirees Medicare Advantage Plan. The NYC Organization of Public Service Retirees, a group organized to oppose the privatization, has succeeded in getting a temporary stay of the rollout, pushing it back from January 1st to April 1st of this year. State Supreme Court Judge Frank Lyle is expected to make a final decision on the plan in March, after the group files its toughest arguments against it.
Forget About What’s Wrong with Healthcare:

The Problem is Our Health

Fixing the healthcare system has less to do with fixing healthcare and more to do with getting healthy

By Grant Gelles

The COVID-19 pandemic has done nothing but expose our greatest vulnerabilities, break us down, and teach us the perils of being unhealthy. 94.9% of all hospitalized COVID patients had at least 1 underlying medical condition, and the average COVID death involved a patient with 2.9 comorbidities.

Knowing that the vast majority of COVID complications occurred in individuals with chronic disease (Obesity, Anxiety, Diabetes, Heart Disease), why was there absolutely no emphasis on improving health as prophylaxis from COVID deaths?

I seemingly recall Dr. Fauci instilling fear, telling us to stay inside, and reminding us to remain isolated; three things that we have proven time and time again to decrease our resiliency, increase our stress, and lead to further health consequences. This is not to mention that lockdowns had no meaningful effect on preventing deaths.

The last key reason for our failing health as a nation comes down to the individual, their agency, and availability of resources. With such an intense focus on the healthcare system, we fail to provide adequate opportunity for those of low socio-economic status to avoid most health-related costs. For those with adequate resources to manage a balanced diet, exercise frequently, and receive adequate support, there are very few excuses aside from a lack of agency and understanding.

We are all sick and tired of hearing about our plagued medical system but can provide no solution. Instead, we should be sick and tired of ourselves for continuing to prop up a medical system that has very little concern for our health relative to its profitability.

If you are as frustrated as I am, listen to Dr. Fauci: do something positive for your health. As for helping the rest of the population, start the game of telephone and begin sharing the importance of our choices in keeping us healthy. Finally, and most importantly, we must educate our elected officials to divert spending from sick care towards health care. Rather than dealing with the consequences of poor access to healthy food and lifestyles, let’s collectively agree to fund access and avoid consequences all together.
By Hannah Reimann

**MUSIC REVIEW**

**“It’s All Music”—Lee Morgan**

Celebrating Lee Morgan’s Life, Artistry and Slug’s Saloon

OPENING NIGHT AT SLUG’S

9 AVENUE B, NY 10009

Jazz Trumpeter Lee Morgan (1938-1972) left a striking legacy after his truncated 33-year-old life. A virtuoso composer and performer with his own elaborate melodic style, his tragic demise due to a gun fired by his common-law wife, Helen Moore aka Helen Morgan, occurred after she brought Morgan’s gun to him to help him deal with a drug dealer he was unsatisfied with. According to this, other lore shared in person on stage and via zoom recordings projected onto the wall of the new Slug’s Jazz club, there was another woman involved that night, someone Morgan also loved, leading to a crime of the heart by Helen. Eyewitnesses gave their accounts and there was a moment of silence by everyone present.

A brilliant show opening the new jazz club commemorated Morgan’s death, exactly 50 years ago on February 19 which took place at a down-and-dirty Jazz club, also called Slug’s. The old venue was located around the corner from 9 Avenue B at 243 East Third Street. The 2022 Slug’s was packed and wine flowed freely. Unique Café tables borrowed from Robin Hirsch’s late Cornelia Street Café which Hirsch had in storage provided an appealing friendliness. There was a fresh, new feeling of excitement and camaraderie in the room due to the huge group effort to open a venue in the midst of our pandemic times.

Most important for the evening’s festivities were the musicians. Alphonso Horne on trumpet, Greg Lewis on sax, Mathis Picard on piano, Marty Jane on bass and Darian Douglas on drums showcased the incredible skill and musicality of Morgan and his colleagues. Their intricate solos and improvisations captured the era and talent of musicians that clearly left a positive influence, technical challenge and opportunity for mastery for these young players. Their love and dedication was evident in every phrase of their execution and expression. For someone who died so suddenly and brutally, the music was contrastingly joyful, full of humor and imagination.

This unusual bright spot at a time when many music venues are tepidious to open and hire performers as they did pre-pandemic was a most uplifting evening of laughter, applause and success. A couple got up and danced in the aisles. Proprietor, Alan Buchman of the Culture Project created the new Slug’s in association with Blueprint and their connection to Africa. Buchman and Nkolo had joined forces in 2009 to create two major concerts in the UN General Assembly Hall: one commemorating the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and one honoring the UN Peacekeepers on UN Day. These interesting details about the presenters made the evening even more meaningful.

Hannah Reimann is a pro musician, author, and educator who has made films as an actor and director. She has concertized her multi-genre shows as pianist, singer, and composer internationally including an Off-Broadway run of Both Sides Now: The Music of Joni Mitchell. She will be releasing an EP of original songs in 2022. Creator of The International Streets Piano Festival in 2021.

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**Culture & Cuisine**

By Robin Hirsch

**O1**

From the collection, The Whole World Passes Through Stories from the Cornelia Street Café

One early evening in July, my lovely host (I can’t quite remember which one, but all our hosts are lovely) called down to the office and said, “There’s a woman at O1 [O stands for outside, and O1 is the first table on the left if you’re facing out from the bar room] who says she was here seventeen years ago and she would like to speak to you. I am a sucker for these kinds of moments, so of course I came up. At O1 were three people—a mother, a father, and what I assumed was a daughter. I introduced myself and the mother asked me how long I had been here. I said that this month we were celebrating our 24th birthday and that I had been here since the day we were born—indeed from the moment of conception. I detected an accent. “Where are you from?” “From Germany.” “I taught in Germany a hundred years ago.” “Oh, really, where?” “In the Ruhr, at the Ruhr Universität Bochum, in the first year it opened, 1966. I understand it’s quite big now.” “Oh, my sympathies. Yes, it is huge now. But it is no more beautiful. May I present my husband?” “How do you do?” “And my daughter.” “How do you do?”

“May I present you my daughter, Cornelia?”

“So, of course, we opened a bottle of champagne and we took photos of the family, and of the four of us, and of the café from the outside, and of the famous table at which, seventeen years before, this beautiful young woman had acquired her name.

Robin Hirsch is a former Oxford, Fulbright, and English Speaking Union Scholar, who has acted, directed, taught, published and produced on both sides of the Atlantic; but the titles of which he is proud were self-bastowed: Minister of Culture, Wine Czar, and Dean of Faculty at the Cornelia Street Café in Greenwich Village, which he owned and operated for more than 40 years, and which Mayor Ed Koch proclaimed “a culinary as well as a cultural landmark.”
ART

My Journey to Watercolor Street Scenes of the West Village

By Kazuya Morimoto

I've been painting cityscapes of historical neighborhoods since 2007, mainly in Greenwich Village, where people call me “Kaz.”

I was born and raised in Okayama in southwest Japan’s countryside, one of the most conservative regions. Japan is a stratified society. Which level of society you belong to—the school you attended, the company you work for—is more important than what you do. To succeed as an artist you must be accepted by a good art school. There, you learn which art group you belong to.

As there was no art school in my hometown, I studied sociology and worked at a local company for a few years. However, there was a watercolor class at a local cultural center. I attended for a few years. When I began, a co-worker said, “You started taking a painting class? That’s a girl’s thing to do!!” (Yes, my whole class consisted of elderly women, other than one elderly retired man and myself.)

Eventually, I met Makoto Arimichi, who’d lived in San Francisco and opened an art studio for people who took art seriously, not just to train for art school entrance exams in Tokyo or Kyoto. I spent a few years in his workshop, where there was an inspiring art community. One day he said, “People like you, who never studied at art school or belonged to an art society in Japan, better go abroad, to learn, absorb and feel the vibe directly at the site, and start creating with your own experiences. People will accept you more in the U.S. You don’t need to be bothered by conservative society.” Makoto respected individuality.

I took two weeks off to go to New York to look for cool artsy experiences and disre-gard my office desk.

New York was a shock—I felt a crack in my brain. I had never seen skyscrapers before, or such a wide variety of races, languages, noises, and fashion. The art scene, the Met, MOMA, and contemporary galleries were beyond my experience. I’d never been to Tokyo or Osaka, having spent most of my life close to my hometown.

Unlike other parents, mine let me do what I wanted. (They probably thought I wouldn’t listen to them no matter what they said.) My father told me I should do whatever I want, with just two conditions: do not rely on family money; do not come back until you become a big shot. My mother was so embarrassed when I moved to New York that she didn’t tell anyone for days earlier. I was supposed to be a missing person, even to my relatives.

Upon moving to New York I registered at the Art Students League. I learned and mastered basics of painting techniques, and learned English by conversing with many foreign students.

A major part of my inspiration and knowledge came from the museums, galleries, and liveliness of New York. But most useful for my artistic development were the various harsh realities, obstacles, and hardships of living here. Most difficult was facing my own existence and finding what to express as an artist. Initially I thought I couldn’t make good art work and, thus, felt totally useless and meaningless.

Nevertheless, I received some grants that allowed me to visit Europe and accept an offer from friends who invited me to stay at their home.

I visited Rome, Florence, Siena, Naples, Venice. I started to sketch with ink in these ancient cities, where the profound history was overwhelming. The following year I planned a more intensive watercolor sketch trip. I hadn’t painted with watercolor for a long time, but once I began, the brush started to move smoothly. After that, it became my custom to sketch in Europe every summer.

In 2007, a few months after returning from my second sketch trip, I was sitting quietly on a bench in Bleecker Park on Christmas Day. I was sad because a woman I was planning to spend Christmas with—a dream girl who looked like Liv Tyler—had left a few days earlier. I’d thought I might commit suicide if I stayed in my small Upper West Side apartment, so I decided to go to the Village where busy crowds could cheer me up. But the Village was totally empty and I became more miserable. While hanging my head on a bench, a woman passed in front of me—she disappeared. As I looked at a picture of the dream girl, Liv reappeared with her dog. I approached her and asked for an autograph. She obliged and we chatted a little. At that moment, the way I saw New York changed completely. “This mysterious and magical event can only happen here!” My sadness disappeared and my heart started beating rapidly. It felt like each small building was gently shining and snuggly up to me. I decided to sketch in this beautiful magical neighborhood regularly. New York can be beautiful.

There is an accumulation of history in the Village. Many historical streets and sights still remain, though, sadly, the beautiful streets and old-fashioned cafes and restaurants are in danger of disappearing, or losing their character to gentrification. Where are the Bohemian spirits of the past? I have hoped to preserve their legacy and history in my painting.

The millions of New York stories inform my work, in which some people find special value; some smile, some cry. The Village is a special place for current and former residents. I share the full-of-life dramas while I’m painting on the street. (I want to respond to everyone’s requests but it’s not possible.) When asked if I paint from photos, my answer is “NO.” I am not just painting cityscapes, but also my experiences.

Covid-19 blew the whole world and many people left New York. Yet more people have contacted me than ever before. “I’m leaving New York so I want to buy your painting.” Because some would like paintings of other neighborhoods as well as of the Village, I decided to go to other historic areas of the city.

I have realized that I enjoy painting for others, not just creating art for myself. Although many old buildings and remnants have been demolished since I started painting here, my mission is to keep painting on the street as long any of the history and magic of the West Village remains. I will keep preserving and sharing in my painting as long as my spirit lasts and my brush runs.
This month saw a strong French presence arriving in our area. A beloved pharmacy closed, but many new businesses are planning a spring opening. I made it to two new eateries on the day they opened, and at one of them, my companion and I were the first customers, arriving. I’m embarrassed to say, about 5 minutes before the official opening.

**Open**

**El Condor** - 95 Greenwich Avenue between Bank and 12th Streets

There are many coffee spots in the Village, and a number of them are quite lovely. So what sets El Condor apart from the others? For one thing, Nicolas Simon, one of the owners, has a fine dining pedigree. He is French, and worked at a number of Michelin-starred restaurants, including Alain Ducasse at the Plaza Athénéé in Paris. From there he was sent to New York to work at Mr. Ducasse’s restaurant here. Eventually, he and his partner, Mijon Demiraj, founded Wilcuma, a real estate and restaurant consulting business. When they decided to open their own restaurant, they started a WeFunder campaign where they raised $299,900. They had been looking at the Greenwich Avenue space for a client, but ended up choosing it as the location of their first café. The space had housed Nourish Kitchen + Table, and when that closed, a Colombian street food restaurant SoFresco was supposed to open, but it never did (apparently after a long period of renovations the partners in that venture fell out and the restaurant plans ended.) The current space has been decorated very elegantly, with lots of attention to detail. There are lounge tables and high tops, and plugs are available at every seat. For now, the gas has yet to be turned on, so the full menu is not available, but what we tried was delicious. The buckwheat cacio e pepe scone tasted like an amped up, flaky cheese biscuit, the salad featured warm farro, and the congee was declared to be wonderful by my dining companion. When I asked Nicolas why he had chosen the name El Condor, he said that it was from the song El Condor Pasa that Simon and Garfunkel covered in 1966, and that was most recently occupied by Golden Rabbit, a much-missed casualty of the pandemic. It seemed like I was getting daily updates from readers about the anticipated opening—everyone was eager for pizza, apparently. On February 17th I was walking by and noticed that it had quietly opened. I tried the margherita slice which had tomato sauce, fresh mozzarella, and basil. It was lovely. The upper west side location is known for its spicy pepperoni slice (aka “roni cups” because of the curly shape of the pepperoni), and the one here did not disappoint. The cheerful red neon logo beckons you in, and a wall on the left is covered by a collage tribute to all things New York City. The owner, Eytan Sugarman, also runs The White Horse Tavern next door. Sugarman opened the first Made in New York Pizza on the Upper West Side in 2019, and at the beginning of the pandemic that location pivoted for a while to providing pizzas to first responders at hospitals across the five boroughs.

**Closed**

**New York Chemists** (77 Christopher Street between West 4th and Bleecker Streets) has closed. I received many emails from readers and staff at WestView alerting me to the closing, with some saying they were devastated. New York Chemists had always advertised in WestView, so it will seem strange that they are not there anymore. According to a thread on NextDoor, customers were told that the landlord had raised the rent so much “that they just couldn’t do it.” Another long-time small business, Andrade Shoes Repair (487 6th Avenue between 12th and 13th Streets) is also gone. A sign on the door explains: “After 42 years in business, we are sad to inform you that we are closing due to pandemic hardship.” They encourage customers to patronize Cesar’s Shoe Repair at 104 West 14th Street (just west of 6th Avenue) which will also feature tarts, cakes and other desserts has signage up at 15th Street (between West 12th and Jane Streets). Their other location is on the upper west side. Arthur & Sons, an “Old School New York Italian” restaurant should be opening in April at 38 8th Avenue (between West 12th and Jane Street). The owner, Joe Isidori, trained at the Culinary Institute, and is the owner of Black Tap Burger (and the author of the book Craft Burgers and Crazy Shakes from Black Tap). The previous tenant was the Italian Wine Company store.

**Other**

St. Theo’s has opened a secret bar behind a velvet curtain in their dining room. Venice Bar, as it’s called, is serving Venetian food and drink. The food is in the form of cicchetti, a Venetian appetizer/small plate that usually accompanies drinks. In real Venice, people wander from one cicchetti bar to another, sampling different offerings at each stop.

We heard from many of you this month—but don’t stop now! As always, we love to hear from you at wvnewsinout@gmail.com

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**Sevilla**

Restaurant & Bar

Authentic Spanish Cuisine

62 Charles Street Corner of West 4th Street

(212) 929.3189 or (212) 243.9513
A View from the Kitchen

By Isa Covo

A year ago, I was sure that our lives, for the most part anyway, would have returned to normal. That COVID would have largely been contained, that on Valentine’s Day we would have been hugging all present, even strangers. Well, it did not happen. Even though the situation has improved there are still many constraints, and they won’t end until enough people get vaccinated. Those who claim that the mandates infringe upon their liberties – well, what about our liberties and the liberties of those who died?

This reminds me of a saying in Ladino: A group of people went on a boat ride. Suddenly someone notices that one of the travelers has gotten hold of a drill and has proceeded to drill a hole in the bottom of the boat; the rest of the riders try to stop him, but he protests, saying “I drill a hole in my spot,” in the original. That is exactly the attitude of the antivaxxers.

Both trials of the vigilantes who killed Ahmaud Arbery ended as they should. Those three men were out on a hunt and the juries knew that to convict them was the right decision. Can you imagine having armed men running around killing someone, in this case an unarmed young man, in shorts and shoes, at a whim because they found that individual suspicious? If they did, they should have called the police. No, they just found it justifiable to lynch him. Those men deserve what they got, and I hope their names will be forgotten—I refuse to mention them—but what they got, and I hope their names will be forgotten. I refuse to mention them—but that Ahmaud’s will always be remembered.

Do you think we will face a new Cold War? I visited Russia a few years ago, and things seemed to be quite normal, although there were some complaints about the government. I could not have ever imagined that anything like this would have occurred. And then there is inflation. Take heart, I remember a couple of other periods of inflation, and we made it through.

Spring will be here soon. Let us get ready to enjoy it.

Farro, Cranberry Bean and Chickpea Soup

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

1 cup farro or wheat berries
1 cup dried chickpeas
1 cup dried borlotti, or cranberry beans
1/2 cup olive oil, preferably extra-virgin
6 garlic cloves
1 medium onion, chopped
1 cup leek, white part and some of the light green, chopped
1 or 2 small dried whole red chili peppers
4 medium carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
4 celery ribs, thinly sliced
1 bay leaf
1 large sprig of fresh oregano, or 1 teaspoon dried
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 large sprig of sage or 1/2 tsp. powdered
1 bay leaf
1 large sprig of fresh oregano, or 1 teaspoon ground
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
5 cups vegetable or chicken broth
2 teaspoons sea salt, or to taste
4 celery ribs, thinly sliced
1/2 cup olive oil, preferably extra-virgin
1/2 cup chopped parsley leaves
Fresh, the oregano and the sage. Stir in the chopped parsley.

1. Rinse well and soak the beans, chickpeas, and farro overnight in separate containers.
2. Chop the onion and mince the garlic. Rinse the peppers but leave them whole.
3. In a large saucepan, heat the oil over medium high heat, and when it starts simmering, add the chopped onion, the garlic, chilies and the bay leaf. Stir the ingredients to coat them with the oil and cook until the onions begin to soften and become translucent. Add the carrots and celery and continue cooking for another minute. Add the beans, chickpeas and farro.
4. Pour the broth into the saucepan, stir, add the herbs and the spices, and bring to a boil. The liquid should cover the ingredients; add water or more broth if necessary. Cover the pot and lower the heat so the liquid is simmering. Cook about 2 ½ hours, stirring the soup occasionally so that it does not stick to the saucepan. If the mixture looks dry, add some water or broth. When ready, the grain and beans should be very soft, but not mushy, and the soup should be thick. Season with salt to taste.
5. Just before serving, remove and discard the bay leaf and chilies, and, if using fresh, the oregano and the sage. Stir in the chopped parsley.
6. Serve in bowls and pass the olive oil, balsamic vinegar and toasts at the table.

Note: Although I do like balsamic vinegar, I find that it overwhelms the other flavors.
THEATER

Super Couple Matthew and Sarah on Broadway


By Robert Heide

Finally in 2022 it is great to see Matthew Broderick and Sarah Jessica Parker on a Broadway stage together in Neil Simon's Plaza Suite which just opened. Plaza Suite is comprised of three one act plays, with the lead actors playing different couples in each play. The couples successively inhabit the same suite at the Plaza Hotel and several actors, playing different characters round out the dramas which are piercing looks at love and marriage. It is a limited run at the Hudson Theatre—141 West 44th Street—until June, 2022, so hurry and get your tickets.

This revival of Simon's play which originally opened up on Broadway way back in 1968 and was made into a movie in 1971 with Walter Matthau and Maureen Stapleton, was scheduled to open March 28, 2020 as announced in the New York Times with a big photo layout of Broderick and Parker. My article in the April, 2020 edition of Westview News, entitled 'The Big Shutdown on Broadway' was to have been a review of The Girl from the North Country at the Belasco Theatre then (after initial productions in London and off-Broadway at the Public Theater), that play being the last I saw for two years. The night I saw it, which was its last night, the house was packed. There were many in the audience coughing. Some people seemed to be having breathing problems and the next day, to the worlds' amazement, all 41 Broadway theaters closed down due to the Covid pandemic, including Plaza Suite and the revival of my friend Edward Albee's masterwork, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, both of which were in previews.

Now, North Country is back and so are all the big Broadway productions including Plaza Suite starring Greenwich Village's own Super Couple Matthew Broderick and Sarah Jessica Parker who had two long years to memorize their lines and fine tune their performances. They also seem to have been phenomenally successful. The internet reports that between them they are 'worth' over $200 million and that they sold their townhouse on Charles Street, purchased in 2000 for $3 million, just down the block from WestView publisher and editor in chief George Capisi's house, for $15 million and investing in a house on a nearby street turning them into one giant townhouse. They could live anywhere, but everyone is happy that they continue to live in the West Village where Matthew grew up. Sarah came originally from Ohio and the couple met when both were performing in a 1995 Broadway revival of How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying.

I first met Matthew at a party at my at my good friend Rochelle Oliver's place in a large apartment building on the northwest corner of Washington Square. He was a regular at Rochelle's holiday parties as he lived just upstairs and with his parents James and Patsy Broderick often came downstairs to celebrate Christmas and New Year's along with other tenants in the building including the great actress Uta Hagen with whom I also studied after my courses with Stella Adler were finished. Uta, of course, was the founder with her husband Herbert, of the Berkshire Studios. Rochelle and fellow actor Carol Goodman, both teachers at the school, often performed in Horton Foote plays and many theater folk like Carol and playwright/screenwriter Foote (he received Academy Awards for screenplays for Tender Mercies, The Trip to Bountiful and To Kill a Mockingbird) and sometimes his children Hallie and Horton Foote Jr. were also present; and as well as a lot of fun, a big roast turkey with all the trimmings could always be counted on. Rochelle, a splendid actress who took over the role of Honey from Mia Dillon on Broadway in Virginia Woolf had been married to James Patterson who performed in a number of early Harold Pinter plays, and they had a son, John Patterson. Sadly, James, a fine actor, passed away early on as did James Broderick, Matthew's father, a beloved actor (TV show Family, and films including Alice's Restaurant, Dog Day Afternoon, The Iceman Cometh) who died of cancer in 1982. The two fatherless boys, John and Matthew, attended the City and Country School in the Village and both attended classes at Berghof Studios. John once acted in my play The Bed when it was presented at Theatre for the New City. Matthew became, very quickly, a big star after the release of the movies WarGames (1983) and Ferris Bueller's Day Off (1986). He was also a muse for Neil Simon playing teenagers in two of the playwright's early autobiographical plays Brighten Beach Memoirs and Biloxi Blues as well as with Horton Foote, acting in various plays from The Orphans Home Cycle, Valentin's Day and 1918; the latter a 1985 film which included in the cast Rochelle Oliver and Horton Foote Jr., depicting the effects of the 1918 pandemic on the inhabitants of a small town in Texas. Harvey Fierenstein cast Matthew in his 1981 play Torch Song Trilogy and in the movie version in 1988 which also starred Fierenstein and Anne Bancroft.

At one of Rochelle's holiday parties the great actor Fritz Weaver showed up and, as it seems, it was love at first sight. Soon the couple moved to Fritz's rambling Upper West Side apartment and it was there they were married in 1997, the same year Matthew wed Sarah Jessica. They were part of Fritz and Rochelle's wedding uptown where my picture was taken with the strikingly handsome Matthew. After a few glasses of champagne, (a case was sent by Uta Hagen) Matthew had to rush off to catch a plane to Hollywood and Sarah Jessica, my partner John and myself waved goodbye to him as he changed into low key black sweats in the elevator on the first leg of his journey to film Godzilla (1998.) Matthew was in the very big times now and there was a twinkle in his eyes. He starred on Broadway with Nathan Lane in the revival of the hilarious musical The Producers and the two paired up in the remake of the film—they also paired in Simon's The Odd Couple—and I enjoyed seeing him and Lane again in Terrence McNally's It's Only a Play on Broadway in 2015. An HBO TV star as Carrie Bradshaw in the phenomenally successful Sex and the City, and producer as well, and in at least two movies made from the influential series, Sarah Jessica Parker has evolved into New York's leading fashion icon and has her own line of fashions, shoes, fragrances, a publishing imprint, and other business ventures as well as a new TV series entitled And Just Like That. Like Matthew, she started out young starring in Annie on Broadway in 1979-80. She made several movies including LA Story (1991) and Ed Wood (1994) and before she looked up with Matthew, she dated, among others, no less than Robert Downey Jr. and John F. Kennedy, Jr.

By Gordon Hughes

There is an old saying—I think it was Neil Simon who said it—"When it's 75 degrees and freezing in New York, it's 75 in Los Angeles.

“There are 7.5 million interesting people in New York City, out of nine million; there are 75 interesting people in Los Angeles.”

Well, that may have been a bit of overstating. But if you pick up Miniichelli's new book West Village Origins, you begin to see just how it plays out. The book is just the tip of the cultural iceberg for New York City. Now, individuals do have a choice of great weather versus amazing culture. Therein lies the great distinction between left and right. That's amazing culture. Therein lies the great distinction between left and right. That's the point: bad weather does not deter New Yorkers. Not ever.

For us, dining Italian is something we all take for granted in NYC. Try doing that in Palm Springs. There is no Gene's like the one on West 11th Street in the Village.

The one epicurean delight on the left coast is Mexican food. (A recent ban on the importation of avocados from Mexico has been lifted. I should point out that 90 percent of our avocados come from Mexico.) Guacamole is the iconic premier festive food made from avocados—hence, the slogan about Angelinos being “guac rocks”.

Both coasts have had to deal/live with COVID now. The difference is, in New York the protocols are consistent while in California there is no consistency. Thus, in New York the protocols are consistent while in California there is no consistency. Thus, the population of the Bear Flag Republic is confused, frantic, cranky, and on the edge of another revolt.

New Yorkers are organized in their battle with COVID. The pandemic hit us hard two years ago and we beat it back. It hit us again last December and we handled it again. The numbers have dropped and New York is moving ahead, while in Los Angeles protocols are up in the air. But at least they have the winning Super Bowl Rams in Los Angeles.

By the way, as of this writing it's 75 degrees in Los Angeles.
EVENT

Bringing Art and Ritual to the People

New York Artist SuZen’s Spirit of Spring Festival of the Arts

On the first day of Spring, forty years ago, the quintessential New York City artist, SuZen, produced the historic Coming From Blindness Into Sight event, in the lobby of One World Trade Center. Her performance celebrated the artist’s official change of name to SuZen, and the Vernal Equinox, in the massive, cathedral-ceilinged lobby. On a sea of lush purple carpet, her 6’ x 12’ folding screen displayed a triptych of her Blindseries photographs of the iconic World Trade Center, seen through progressively opening mini-blinds. Performing behind a set of blinds, she emerged from behind the blinds, stripping away her dark layers of clothing, symbolic of her old identity, and revealing her colorful true self, as she danced with audience.

This year, SuZen ushers in the season of renewal on Sunday, March 20, with the Spirit of Spring Festival of the Arts on Pier 46. The event begins at 11 AM with the ringing of bells at the exact moment of the equinox, 11:33 am.

Bell ringing is an international observation of the exact beginning of this season of renewal, which is also observed at the United Nations every year. SuZen’s Spirit of Spring Festival of the Arts, co-hosted by jazz singer, Eve Zanni, invites the public to bring bells and participate in a bell ringing ceremony, led by newly elected City Councilman, Erik Bottcher, who will sing, play guitar, and invite the crowd to sing along. The mystical new age musician, Laraaji, will lead a laughter meditation. Among the many participating artists will be co-host Eve Zanni and the Westbeth Bliss Singers, with pianist Isaac Raz, Bobby Harden, Victoria Horne, Peter Bernstein, and a special appearance of Goldee Goldsteen, The BuddhaFly of Broadway, and “altar ego” of the legendary Keni Fine!

Poets, dancers, and other artists will add to this collaborative event, which includes egg balancing, a Wish Tree for messages of Peace inspired by Yoko Ono, face-painting and art activities for children.

SuZen’s long career in the arts spans over 50 years and many mediums, including fine-art photography, multi-media installations, performance art, design, fashion, and books. New Yorkers know her work from her 40’ by 25’ painted mural on 42nd Street in Times Square, of her Blindseries photograph of NYC skyline seen through blinds, funded by the NYSCA. The artist sees the blinds as a metaphor for perception.

While SuZen’s work has been exhibited in museums and galleries and collected internationally, she takes particular pleasure in presenting in the public sphere, where she can bring art to the people. Over the years, she has created installations and performances at the JFK Airport, Port Authority Bus Terminal, the World Trade Center, and in places abroad, including the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany. Her events always have a participatory element, inviting viewers to take part.

SuZen’s work, suffused with a Buddhist aesthetic, has been described as having mythical purity, exploring career-spanning themes like the dualities of Reality and Illusion and Spirit and Light.

“My purpose is to create beauty, celebration, and inspiration.”
—SuZen

Photo by Maggie Berkvist.
Local NYC Photographer Drops New Street Fashion Book

By Karilyn Prisco

Over the years NYC street style fashion and award winning portrait photographer, Robbie Quinn, has been capturing images of those who brighten up our city streets with vibrant colors and bold patterns, a welcome change against the backdrop of conformity of grey business suits. These individuals use their bodies as a canvas to express their art. Over the years, Robbie has collected these images for his new book, *Street Unicorns™* which will be available at the end of March.

Always a fan of his, and Instagram follower, I caught up with him to discuss this new project.

Tell us a little about the path that led you to your book on street fashion, *Street Unicorns*.

I moved back to New York almost seven years now. When I first arrived, I took the opportunity between commercial photo sessions to do what many photographers have done in the past, let the streets speak to me. When I started meeting and photographing people that were styled in a unique way, I wanted to know about their style. How did they arrive at it? What did it mean to them? How did it make them feel and what were they looking to communicate with it? I have lots of images of other things I’ve photographed in the city, but these photos of those I would come to call ‘Street Unicorns’ resonated with me. And their stories have touched me in a way, giving me a greater understanding that we all want to be true to ourselves, accepted and appreciated. At some point, I realized that I wasn’t gathering photos that were just for a photography or style book, I could see that the stories being shared were more about diversity and inclusion. That’s when I felt that this was meaningful work that I wanted to share and a book seemed like the best way to do that.

What is your description or definition of a “Street Unicorn”?

To me, a “Street Unicorn” is someone who, in an effort to express their most authentic self, goes beyond social norms in the way they present themselves with their personal style. This can be perceived as subtle or extreme by others, but the point is that the person is making a real effort to express that there’s only one of them and that they matter. Also, there’s an aspect of it in which the person is willing to risk criticism in order to not only feel like themselves, but to be happy with themselves.

Explore how you go about finding and capturing these images of people who you refer to as “Street Unicorns”?

Sometimes, people find me on social media or I find them and we arrange to meet, but mostly I really enjoy happening upon the unexpected person on the street. The spontaneity is so exciting and the moment carries this almost magical quality that translates over into the images.

New York is a big city with many diverse neighborhoods. Is there a particular section of the city where you are more likely to find your subjects?

I’m always surprised where a “Street Unicorn” might pop up. The West Village, the rest of Greenwich Village along with SoHo are areas that I often wander around in, but I have had many chance meetings in other neighborhoods all around Manhattan. I plan to venture out to the outer boroughs more, I’ve found some great unique styles in Brooklyn. Also, it looks like traveling could increase again. During a recent commercial work trip to LA, I photographed a couple of people that really inspired me. And although the book is mainly photographed in NYC, I’ve included a number of people from abroad. People from places like Amsterdam, London, Paris, Mumbai, Sydney, Toronto and a few others are included in the book.

How has social media influenced your work?

Sure, I care if a post gets a good response. But social media doesn’t have any strong influence on my work. If it did, I wouldn’t be doing anything outside the box. It’s just a tool to help share my work. When anyone posts on social media, it’s like having a paper graded after it’s turned in. People either like or ignore a post and some of them can even be cruel. Of course, I love it when people share wonderful comments about how a post has brightened their day. But I look at it like it’s just one touch point, not an absolute litmus test of the value of a photo. Social media’s influence is not nearly as important as the influence of the city itself and the people in it. Nothing is more influential than real life. When I’m out with my camera, it’s impossible not to respond to the visuals I encounter. I have to trust my own instincts and appreciate the genuine interactions with the people around me. And having the trust of people I photograph and to be able to help amplify their voices not only influences and inspires me, it helps me learn and grow.

*Street Unicorns™* can be purchased on Amazon. Pre-Order is available.

amazon.com/Street-Unicorns-Robbie-Quinn/dp/1419762044

Karilyn Prisco is the Fashion Director of WestView News and Social Media Manager for WestView News “Style on the Street” IG @styleonthestreet_westviewnews.

Karilyn is a full-time Fashion Stylist and graduate of Fashion Institute of Technology. Her latest projects include LaQuan Smith Fall 2022 NYFW runway show. Karilyn has called the West Village her home for over 15 years. You may have seen her working the local elections polls or ushering at the Cherry Lane Theatre.

Photo by Peter Mazzei.

**BOOK COVER OF STREET UNICORNS™** available on Amazon March 29, 2022. Photo by Robbie Quinn.
Style on the Street—*Our West Village “Street Unicorns”*

Photos by Robbie Quinn.

Submit your favorite neighborhood fashion looks for a chance to be featured.

Follow us on Instagram @styleonthestreet_WestViewNews

Photos by Robbie Quinn.
Hours before this issue went to press, 60 Minutes did a segment on the disappearance of newspapers that are being bought up by large syndicates who greatly reduce the staff and hence news reporting capability.

This publisher was surprised to discover someone reading WestView at the next table at the Bus Stop Cafe. Surprisingly two other tables offered that they also read WestView.

When somebody asks you to contribute money to support a neighborhood cause we put it on our mental to do list, but never get around to pulling out our checkbook or going to PayPal—we always assume somebody else will do it.

Send us your contribution and your thoughts about how we can make WestView better. We will deposit your check and print your thoughts.

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