

Next issue:
Sat., May 1

The Main Street **WIRE**

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Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



The Island's landmarked Chapel of the Good Shepherd was full last Sunday for Cabrini Parish Easter services. A \$350,000 rehabilitation of the structure is nearly complete. Last week, the Common Council of the Residents Association urged acceptance of a Firefighters' offer of an electronic carillon for the Chapel bell tower.

Film Fest Opens Today

The Roosevelt Island Film Festival opens this afternoon at 2:00 at Manhattan Park Theater Club for a three-session look at Roosevelt Island in the movies, sponsored as a fundraiser by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society (see *ComingUp*, page 3). Selections range from an early Edison Company panorama of the east side of the Island through *Spider-Man*, scheduled for tomorrow afternoon. One feature, scheduled for tonight's program, is *Blackwell's Island*, originally planned as a Warner Brothers B movie, but expanded with additional footage because John Garfield was on the cusp of stardom. The real story behind the movie story made news in 1934:

Facts Behind Hollywood Fiction

Seventy years ago, Roosevelt Island was raided.

It was Welfare Island then. The raid took the City's notorious penitentiary back from mob bosses who had ruled the roost, exploiting their fellow prisoners with the tacit permission or active cooperation of its warden and deputy warden.

Five years later, John Garfield starred in a fictionalized version of the story, playing a crusading reporter who is fired by one newspaper for probing too deeply, then

WELFARE ISLAND RAID BARES GANGSTER RULE OVER PRISON; WEAPONS, NARCOTICS FOUND

New York Times headline

hired by another. The movie shows Hollywood's talent for turning a scattered and somewhat undramatic set of facts into B-movie drama.

But the real story was dramatic enough.

Arthur Flegenheimer had died just two years before the raid. Under the name Dutch Schultz (which he had adopted from a deceased gangster of the 1800's), Schultz had ruled Prohibition-era beer distribution in New York City, viciously doing away with any threat of competition.

By 1934, one of Schultz's lieutenants, Joseph Rao, was an inmate here; rumor had it that he had arranged to be incarcerated on the Island in order to run the prison drug racket. He was identified in

news reports on the raid as the head of "the Italian mob" in the institution. Another inmate, Edward Cleary, had "the Irish mob." Between them, they essentially ran the Blackwell's Island Penitentiary, at least at the inmate level.

Cleary and Rao and some 66 members of their gangs had passes allowing them the run of the Island. They were billeted in the prison hospital in relative luxury, their quarters known among inmates as "politician's row" because a former Queens Borough President, Maurice Connolly, had served time there.

By 1940, the story of the Blackwell's Island prison corruption was the currency of pulp detective magazines. Cleary and Rao each had a pigeon cote, and the claim was that they were using the birds — as many as 100 in one flock — as drug couriers. Rao had a pet German shepherd, named "Screw Hater," rumored to be a jealous guard of his master's possessions and living space.

Use of the Island for prison purposes began as early as 1782, when one Sir Guy Carlton determined that it should be used as a daytime retreat for the City's prisoners dur-

See **1934 Raid**, page 4

Briefly...

Roosevelt Island Day will be June 12 this year.

Manhattan-bound F-train service from Roosevelt Island will be suspended from midnight to 5:00 a.m. next weekend (April 24-26). Take a Queens-bound train to Roosevelt Avenue, then change to a Manhattan-bound F (running on the E line).

Mayor Nominates Resident, Michael Shinozaki, for RIOC Appointment, Subject to Governor's Approval, Will Give Residents Majority of Board Seats

Mayor Michael Bloomberg has nominated a resident, Michael Shinozaki, to the RIOC Board of Directors.

In an April 1 letter to Governor George Pataki, Bloomberg wrote, "I am pleased to recommend Michael Shinozaki for appointment to the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. His appointment will fill a vacancy on the Board." Under the lease that gives New York State control over Roosevelt Island, the Mayor is entitled to recommend two members of the nine-member Board, one of whom must be a resident.

State Senator Olga Mendez, who was instrumental in the selection of Shinozaki, told *The WIRE* on Wednesday, "I am very, very happy that the mayor has recommended Michael Shinozaki. I consider him very highly qualified."

The appointment is subject to the Governor's acceptance, and confirmation by the State Senate. Presuming both happen, residents will have a five-member majority on the Board. That would fulfill the terms of the law Governor George Pataki signed in Fall, 2002, changing the composition of the Board.



Michael Shinozaki, as he talked with a fellow resident after October's Halloween Parade.

Architectural Consultant Is a 13-Year Resident

by Anusha Shrivastava

As the middle child in a family of five kids, Michael Shinozaki often had to play the role of a peacemaker. It is a role he says he was good at and one that he enjoyed. Now, he may have the opportunity to play a similar role on Roosevelt Island, as the newest resident appointee to the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation.

"I had to learn to get along with my brothers and sisters and now I have to get along with people on and off the Island," says Shinozaki, who is 38. He is fully aware that

there are varied politically motivated interests at play and that he will have to use his diplomatic skills to achieve the ends he believes important in his new role. "We need more transparency and more rationality," he says.

He says he is not sure about how much of a commitment his new position will require in terms of his time and effort but he is willing to work so that the community on the Island benefits from it all. "I want to see what the budget numbers are and see what can be made of them," Shinozaki says. "All information should be available to members of

the community because none of it is a threat to national security."

An architectural consultant by profession, Shinozaki says he can understand facts and figures and likes to make sense of them. He says he would like to modernize the information infrastructure available on the Island and introduce better management practices. "There should be more rationality in the process of governance of the Island," he says. "Everyone should try to separate out facts, opinions, and biases," he says. "People are confused about politics and facts."

An Island resident since 1991, Shinozaki enjoys fencing and flying. He competed at the national level as a fencer but says the training was more fun than the actual contest.

In 2000, he married Lynn Strong, a former Manhattan Park neighbor, with whom he has a son, Mark. Strong had two children, Joseph and Haley, from a previous marriage. Shinozaki jokes that his friends teased him about this: "After all, I went from being a bachelor to a father of three in two years."

Shinozaki says the family loves the Island because it is such a friendly place to live. "This is the most densely populated city in the region and yet the bus stops for you if you run after it."

Insurance Fair Today to Urge Renter Coverage

Today at noon the Residents Association will present the Island's first-ever Insurance Fair, aimed at getting Islanders to protect themselves with apartment insurance. The event was inspired, initially, by a disastrous fire in Eastwood that destroyed all the contents of an apartment and caused related smoke and water damage in adjacent apartments.

Representatives of Housing Management, the Fire Department, and the Police Department will make brief presentations and pass out materials. Insurance vendors will have tables from which they will provide information and offer coverage.

RIRA Common Councilor Sherie Helstien, one of the organizers of the event, said a key goal is to get residents to pay attention to the insurance question. "Personal possessions are not covered by any insurance carried by building owners," she said. "It's up to tenants to cover their own insurance needs, both for personal property and liability."

An alternative session, for those who don't get to today's, is set for Wednesday, April 28, at 7:30.

"It's imperative that residents understand why this kind of insurance is necessary," Helstien said. "Today's event will be over in time

for the start of the Roosevelt Island Film Festival, so we encourage as many people to come as possible, even if they have insurance, and to encourage their neighbors to attend."

She added, "We'd like to see this become an annual event, possibly in conjunction with Roosevelt Island Day." Helstien worked with RIRA Housing Committee Chair Mark Chipman in making arrangements for the event.

RIRA Preparing a New Constitution With Bylaws

The Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) is working on a revision of the organization's constitution.

RIRA First Vice President Steve Marcus told *The WIRE*, "This will address some of the inconsistencies and anachronisms that have become apparent since the constitution was last amended 13 years ago. The committee has unanimously recommended that the operating rules be split out into separate bylaws, where they can more easily be amended in the future, should the need arise."

One revision currently needed is provision for representation from the new buildings in Southtown.

The RIRA Common Council will further consider the proposed revisions at its May meeting. If two-thirds of the delegates approve, the revision will come before a town meeting later that month, says Marcus. If a quorum of 100 residents attend and approve, the revisions will become final.

Residents Association President Matthew Katz discusses the constitutional revision process in his column in this issue (page 3).

*About *The WIRE*'s e-mail bulletins: They are issued infrequently, when warranted by news of importance to Island residents. E-mail addresses are not made available to third parties.

The Editorial Page

That Was Then, This Is...

The occasion of the Roosevelt Island Film Festival, which is showing *Night Hawks* this afternoon, is a reminder of how things have changed here.

A quarter-century ago, when Sylvester Stallone and crew took over the Roosevelt Island Tramway to shoot that movie's climactic scenes, there was much direct benefit to the community. The producers knew how to work with the community.

More important, the administrators then at RIOC thought of Roosevelt Island as a place where people live. They pointed the moviemakers to community leaders, making it clear that *residents* should be considered a high priority.

So the *Night Hawks* producers sat down with Residents Association President Lou Carbonetti and First Vice President Ron Vass, and talked turkey. As a result...

The *Night Hawks* crew covered the loss of Tram service with frequent luxury buses on which every passenger was served coffee, donuts, and a newspaper.

The *Night Hawks* producers made a \$50,000 cash contribution to the Youth Program, and the Day Nursery got \$5,000.

And they filled all their food and beverage needs on Roosevelt Island – a substantial contribution to the local microeconomy.

Contrast that with the current production of *Dark Water* (the logo here is from the 2002 Japanese version). Community



leaders found out about the production plans only when *The WIRE* reported November 8 that a production was planned – with no specific dates available. Particulars, though apparently known at RIOC, were provided to neither *The WIRE* nor the community until shooting was imminent. There was no opportunity, this time, for RIRA to seek compensation for the inevitable inconveniences inflicted upon the community.

Dark Water producers brought all their food in from outside. The local economy got no boost.

Only minimal bus transportation was provided to replace a pre-empted Tramway – though, to be fair, we must acknowledge that there was no subway alternative when *Night Hawks* was shooting, and *Night Hawks* tied up the Tramway far longer.

And local organizations received nothing we know of to make all the inconvenience worth what residents had to bear. (In the interests of full disclosure, we add that *The WIRE* was given \$100 for allowing the paper to be seen on film, if that were to happen. Yes, that *is* the correct number of zeroes.)

Current RIOC President Herb Berman is making things easier here for filmmakers. It's a source of income for RIOC but, given a half-dozen years of sacrifice deals RIOC has made, we have to wonder just how much. (We've asked. No answers yet.)

We think things should change back. Next time a movie company wants to take over Main Street parking and tow residents' cars or use other facilities on which residents rely, RIOC should sit them down with community leaders who have some experience with such negotiations. We'll accept the inconvenience, but let's have some benefit flow directly to residents and their organizations.

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Letters

To the Editor:

Our Public Safety Department has been vilified frequently for its failures. I would like to tell you about the several times they have helped me. Twice, when I came home after midnight and was not anxious to drive into Motorgate by myself and possibly just miss a Red Bus, I stopped by their office in my car and asked if they would follow me until I parked. "No problem," they said. They followed me in, waited until I parked, and then drove me home. When I thanked them their answer was, "No problem, glad to have helped." Another time, I had completely forgotten where I had parked my car before I went on vacation. They drove me up and down the aisles, since I thought perhaps my car had been stolen when I could not find it, starting on the roof, and all the way down to the fifth level when I spotted it. They were always very polite and patient and helpful. Just thought that for a change they deserve a pat on the back.

Louise Maniloff

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

We have just read your column in the April 3 issue of *The Main Street WIRE* and would like to inform you that not all tenants of Eastwood are thrilled about the filming of *Dark Water*.

We have been pleasantly surprised by the good behavior of the production crew as they went about preparing our hallway and lobby for the filming. It is not their fault that the light-filled, airy entrance to our apartment has been transformed into a sordid tunnel resembling a dungeon in Mogadishu. While the crew was polite, an employee of the management company took it on himself to make us feel that we were intruders in our own homes. He grimaced, sighed, and once even called out, "Is it all right that they go in?" when we were picking up our mail.

Our main reason for writing, however, is that the film will make our lovely Island look like a slum. According to an article by Jim Law in *Variety*, the film takes place "in a cruddy apartment complex" with "some seriously f**ked up plumbing problems."

Diana Keyt

To the Editor:

Welcome to Disneyland (formerly Roosevelt Island) where the death-defying rides are free; one has merely to negotiate the street or enter and traverse one's own lobby (540) and survive the obstacle course to one's own mailbox and the interminable wait for one's own elevator to one's own floor and wend one's wary way to one's very own apartment – without getting hurt or killed or annoyed or dying from a stroke from rage at the very effrontery of it all.

Management will shrug and even provide an escort because the Disney characters, little dears, have dismantled my intercom, preventing me from summoning my aide to help me go home, where I'm going instead of the intended Library, because I cannot get to the Library because they have rendered the street impassable to me in my wheelchair. A month or more of this debacle, or should I say cabal, and all this for free; and think of the fat cats' pockets being lined by all this.

Only here on the lovely tree-lined former Roosevelt Island can you thrill to this stultifying roller-coaster ride for free, boys and girls. With luck they might even shoot artificial rain (real water) into your apartment through your very own window.

Thank you, Disney and management, for raining on my parade and spitting in my face.

Sharon Stern

To the Editor:

Today, five school buses, awaiting dismissal of students, lined up on the northbound side of Main Street, just south of Blackwell House, blocking the road.

Since Main Street is only a two-lane street, the parked buses force northbound drivers to cross the double yellow line illegally to pass them. This is not a good practice.

Just another example of a not-well-thought-out plan.

Don Eremín

To the Editor:

I'm a new resident here from China. I'd like to know something about the culture and the people's life of USA. I also hope to improve my spoken English by the help from the friendly resident here. So could you do me a favor to find a volunteer English tutor for me?

My e-mail address is linz@mail.rockefeller.edu. My telephone number is **212-758-2982** (6-10 p.m.).

Zhen Lin

To the Editor:

Quality of life on Roosevelt Island seems to be a running thread in letters written to Mr. Berman and *The WIRE*. One area that lacks quality of life on Roosevelt Island is the dumpster area behind the Deli, between buildings 575 and 625. Rats are now overrunning the dumpster in the daytime and evening. It is a serious health hazard when you see rats running up the entryway of building 575 in daylight hours and children playing nearby. Under the cover of night the dumpster is a major playground for rats. Why can't anything be done about this health hazard? That area has also become the pigeon-feeding ground for citizens of the Island who have affection for birds. I have seen citizens just dump bread and walk away. There need to be signs posted about not feeding pigeons, for they, too, are a health hazard.

Can't something be done so there is a quality of life in our walkways?

Donna Chenkin

To the Editor:

Is Public Safety working to ensure the safety of residents or is it pursuing a policy of unnecessary harassment and abuse of power?

On March 26, at 8:58 p.m., a 20-year-old woman who was a guest of my daughter was issued a summons to appear in Criminal Court for trespassing because she was sitting in the stairwell, talking on her cell phone. There was no illegal act involved. She was simply waiting for my daughter to come to meet her.

Our guest indicated to the officers that she was a guest of a resident and was permitted to return to my apartment to procure her ID. My daughter and I also were present at the time. I politely asked the officers how she could be trespassing if she were a guest? They responded that we don't "live in the stairwell" and further stated that even a resident might be issued a summons for sitting in the stairwell. I then asked them why she could not simply be issued a warning, since there are no signs to this effect, only a no-trespassing sign by the 551 mailboxes, which our guest had never seen since she entered through the main door. At some point in this discussion the officers called for the sergeant, as they were unable to explain to my satisfaction why this young woman should have to appear in Criminal Court, when a simple, "Please don't sit in this area" would have sufficed.

The sergeant stated that I should take it up with management, since Public Safety is being urged to curtail dangerous activities in the stairwell. While I agree that any "dangerous activities" should be curtailed, I fail to see the application in this case. My guest was even told by the female officer that they had the right to put her in handcuffs! When my daughter protested, she was told that she could be issued a summons for disorderly conduct!

I have brought this matter to the attention of RIHMC General Manager Ms. Doryne Isley as well as Mr. Fry, head of Public Safety. I am outraged that a guest of a resident could be treated in such a manner. Even though it is a great inconvenience for both of us to take time off from work, I plan to accompany this young lady to court and expect this summons to be dismissed. I further assume that Public Safety will come out looking very foolish, if not abusive. I am interested in other residents' similar experiences and hope that you will respond to *The WIRE*.

Victoria Seixas

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number **must** be provided for verification and for our records; *letters submitted anonymously are not considered for publication*.

Preferred form of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file created using any common wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files containing macros), or on a PC-standard 3.5" disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to 212-755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **Letters subject to acceptance and to possible editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

Blotter

At press time, the **Public Safety Blotter** for April 1-15 had not yet been received. It is expected soon, and will be posted on **Website NYC10044** at nyc10044.com/wire/2415/blot2415.html

Letters deadline for May 1 issue: Tuesday, April 27
After deadline, letters considered on a space-available basis.

Email BULLETIN Service

Send an "AddMe" e-mail to WIRE@nyc.rr.com

After the Blackout last summer, several residents approached us to ask about emergency planning for and by Roosevelt Island. The search for answers led us to contact the State and City Offices of Emergency Management. One of the main things that was stressed to us by these agencies was the necessity

The RIOC Column

for individuals to be knowledgeable and prepared for different types of situations. The guidebooks, *Ready New York*, were sent to us as a result, and distributed to all of the housing management companies to be distributed to residents.

A study of the Island and its needs was also performed by the State and City. Now that the study is underway, I am pleased to announce that I have additional information about the emergency-planning meeting to be held by the New York State and New York City offices of Emergency Management. As I reported in my last column, the meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 21. It is now confirmed that the meeting will be from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at PS 217. Representatives from the State and City offices stand ready to give information and answer any questions at this time. RIOC is happy to facilitate this event, and invites all residents to attend.

I am also pleased to announce that as we head into Spring, both Octagon and Firefighter's fields are going to receive the attention that they both deserve. Maintenance, including reseeding, will begin and will be worked, as much as possible, around the scheduling of baseball for the fields. The fields will be partially closed for two months, though, and will be fully in shape for late summer and fall use. We apologize for the inconvenience, but this past winter was very damaging, and we are committed to providing the best and most attractive playing surfaces for the Island's residents and visitors. Please remember the spectacular views from the fields as well as the 250-foot out-field distance!

Back to the weather, the rains of late have been enhanced by rainmaking equipment brought here by *Dark Water*, a film that stars Oscar winner Jennifer Connelly. In addition to the rain, we have also seen a water tower added to the top of the Eastwood building, and a sign announcing that the dry cleaner is now

also a coin-operated laundry. All of these additions will be taken down when the film crew leaves. Everyone is invited to take a moment to watch the filming in action, but be sure to have your umbrella handy.

We look forward to seeing this movie in a future edition of the Roosevelt Island Film festival. Just another reminder that movies, movies, and more movies about Roosevelt Island is the theme of this weekend's Roosevelt Island Film Festival, sponsored and organized by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society under its leader, Judy Berdy. Check it out at www.rihs.us



Herbert E. Berman, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.
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on the web or call **212-688-4836** for the screenings to be held at the Manhattan Park Theater Club

I am sure that many of you have also seen the commercial for a new lottery game with the pandas coming into the City from all different venues, including the Tram. We are thrilled that so many filmmakers now recognize what a wonderful and welcoming place Roosevelt Island is for the arts.

There is finally some good news to report about the elevator at the Tram. A new company has been consulted and they have identified the best steps to take to ensure a temporary, and then a permanent, fix. This whole process has been extremely distressing, and I am now confident that I will soon have all good news to report on this front.

I have additional good news, this time about the Red Buses. We are in the process of purchasing new hybrid electric buses to replace the current fleet. Please note that these buses take approximately two years for delivery, so, while we are excited about providing better service with more environmentally friendly buses, they will not be on the road for approximately two years.

I hope that everyone had a wonderful and happy holiday season. I hope that we have some good, sunny Spring weather soon!

You may recall that, in my last column, I mentioned that the Manhattan-side Tram elevator had been repaired and then was out of commission again. As of this writing, the elevator is not working. Over the last 18 months, and with two major outages of service, the downtime now exceeds the time in operation.

The RIRA Column

If you read Herb Berman's last column, you know that RIOC is frustrated by this state of affairs as well as by the disgraceful condition of Motorgate and the intractable problem of street lighting. These infrastructure issues didn't start with Herb or with his predecessor or his predecessor's predecessor. There is a long history of systemic abandonment of general maintenance and repair that traces back to our loss of State subsidy in 1996. I know that President Berman would like to improve Roosevelt Island structurally, economically, and aesthetically. However, until RIOC can maintain the status quo and return the Island to what used to be a minimal level of operation, they will be unable to consider enhancing life here. Who will want to produce events in a place where long swatches of promenade are in darkness because no one can figure out who is responsible for that group of lights? Who will want to open a business in a place where the Motorgate garage is a mess of spalling and rusting, where the elevators and escalators don't work, where pools of water follow every rain, and where the lack of security allows vandalism to run rampant and Midnight Motors to operate without restraint? I think that RIOC's ability to enhance the Roosevelt Island experience for all of us who live and spend time here will be a function of their capacity to control the chaos that has overwhelmed their maintenance and repair function.

Also in The RIOC Column was notice of an April 21 public meeting on emergency planning, sponsored by the City and State offices of emergency management. The RIRA leadership has been calling for the establishment of a contingency plan, specific to Roosevelt Island's needs, since last summer's Blackout. We are told that planning has taken place, but RIRA has not been invited to participate. This public meeting may be our only opportunity to provide input based on our decades of experience living here and I urge you

to keep a lookout for the RIOC postings promised in the column. We owe it to ourselves to help OEM to do it and get it right the first time. There may not be a second chance.

Your RIRA Common Council has taken on an extraordinary task. We are attempting to create a constitution and bylaws where only a constitution existed before. This exercise is designed to update a document that hasn't been amended since 1991 and to give the Common Council the authority to modify many of its rules without having to convene a Town Meeting and gather 100 RIRA members for every change we require. Currently, the constitution may be amended only through a two-thirds majority vote in Common Council and then a majority vote at a Town Meeting. When the debate over substance and language has subsided and the Council has approved the work,



Matthew Katz, President
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we are then required to convene a quorum of the Island's residents to approve the constitutional changes. When that happens, please answer the call. This is your chance to learn how RIRA operates and to ensure that we are representing your interests adequately and appropriately. If we cannot assemble a quorum, the vote returns to the Common Council and the RIRA membership (that's you!) will have lost an opportunity for oversight. We are only as good, as effective, as you allow us to be. Stay tuned.

In my last column I mentioned the postponement of the Roosevelt Island Bridge renovation project to 2012. Since then I've written to the acting borough commissioner for the Department of Transportation urging that construction begin in 2008. In addition I will be offering a resolution to the Community Board 8 Transportation Committee to endorse this request for an earlier start date. Committee co-chair Dan Quart

See **Katz**, page 7

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Apartment Insurance Fair, today (Sat., Apr. 17), noon, Chapel of the Good Shepherd; sponsored by the Housing Committee of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA). For those unable to attend today, see below for alternate session Wednesday evening, April 28.

Roosevelt Island Film Festival, sponsored by the Historical Society, **Sat., Apr. 17**, 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater Club. Featured afternoon films include a short Thomas Edison film of Blackwell's Island, *Angela's Island*, *No Dogs Allowed*, and *Night Hawks*. Evening films: Edison (repeat), *No Dogs Allowed*, *The Garden*, and *Blackwell's Island*. Adults, \$10; children, \$6. Series subscription for all three sessions: Adult, \$25; children, \$15. See below for Sunday films. Additional information: **212-688-4836** or www.rihs.us.

Roosevelt Island Film Festival, Sun., Apr. 18, 1:30 p.m. Films: Edison film (see listing above), *The Last Trolley in New York*, *Dead End*, and *Spider-Man*. See listing above for prices and Saturday programs.



— The Coming Week —

Emergency Management Public Meeting, Wed., Apr. 21, 7:00 p.m., PS 217 auditorium.

Community Board 8 meeting, Apr. 21, 7:00 p.m., Hunter College of Social Work auditorium, 129 East 79th Street. Additional information: **212-758-4340**.

Arthur Tress Exhibition, Thur., Apr. 22 through May 29, Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11:00-6:00, Hunter-Fox Gallery, 35 East 67th St., 4th floor. Photographs of constructions made in 1984 at Charity Hospital (since demolished) on Roosevelt Island. (See story, page 7.)



Postponed: Roosevelt Island Star Search at Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance, originally scheduled **Sat., Apr. 24**.

— Future Events —

Memorial Service for Ira Holland (who died March 16), **Sun., Apr. 25**, 2:00 p.m., Manhattan Park Theater Club. Light refreshments.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Apr. 26, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577 / 212-935-1254**.

Apartment Insurance Fair, Wed., Apr. 28, 7:30 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd; sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA). Alternate date for those unable to attend session scheduled Saturday April 17 (see above).

Arthur Tress Exhibition Reception, Thur., Apr. 29, 5:00-9:00 p.m., Hunter-Fox Gallery, 35 East 67th St., 4th floor. See listing of exhibition dates, above.

Arbor Day Tree-Planting ceremony, Fri., Apr. 30, 10:00 a.m., East promenade facing Queens, just north of Eastwood.

The Main Street WIRE – next issue **Sat., May 1**. (To receive e-mail bulletins in the meantime, send an "Add Me" message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, **Fri., Apr. 23**; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, **Mon., Apr. 26**; fliers due **Thur., Apr. 29**. **Future issues:** May 15, 29; June 12; July 3 (Fourth of July issue), 31; Aug. 28; Sept. 11, 25; Oct. 16, 30 (pre-election issue); Nov. 6 (post-election issue), 20 (Thanksgiving issue); Dec. 4, 18 (two December holiday issues), then twice a month starting in January, 2005. (Schedule subject to adjustment.) **Phone/fax** for news, **212-826-9055/755-2540**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. **Phone/fax** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214/755-2540**. **To list your organization's Island event in this column**, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions; there is no charge.



TREE CITY USA.

Trees of Roosevelt Island exhibit, through **May**, Rivercross windows.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, Wed., May 5, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public access near beginning of session.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., May 10, 7:45 p.m., Westview Community Room.

Senior Center

<p>Monday 10-11, Latchhook Class 10-11:30, English as 2nd Lang. 10:30, Blood Pressure Screen 12:30, "Oldies" Movies 1:00, Tai Chi 7:00, Dance Class (Beginners)</p> <p>Tuesday 9-1, Tax Help for Seniors 10:00, Computers 10-11, Dance & Relax 1:00, Bingo 6:00, Yoga Class 7:30, Games (RISA)</p> <p>Wednesday 9:15, Stay Well 10:00, Spanish Class 10:30, Shoppers' Bus 12:30, Sculpting 7:00, Pokeno (RISA)</p>	<p>Thursday 10:00, Tai Chi 10:30, Creative Arts 12:30, Movie 7:00, Dance</p> <p>Friday 6:00, Dance & Relax 9:30, Yoga Stretch 7:00, Games (RISA)</p> <p>Saturday 7:30, Bingo (RISA)</p>
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Special Events

Wed., Apr. 21, Atlantic City trip
Fri., Apr. 23, 1:00, Volunteer Week recognition
Fri., Apr. 30, 12:30, Birthday Party
Sun., May 16, Senior Day (all day)

Home-delivered meals: **212-744-5022**, ext. 1203

1934 Raid from page 1

ing the hot season. But the prison in use in the 1930's dated from the 1830's. By the mid-1930's, with New York City's growing population, it was outmoded and inadequate. Already, under the guidance of Commissioner of Corrections Austin H. MacCormick, a pioneer humanitarian reformer, the City was building a new prison on Riker's Island.

But the stench of corruption on Blackwell's Island had to be addressed. MacCormick found a way to make a splash. He invited reporters from the City's many newspapers of the day to his office, inviting them to join him on a tour of the new Riker's Island facility. Meanwhile, he phoned Welfare Island, telling Deputy Warden Daniel Sheehan and told him to lock all 1,600 prisoners in their cells, saying the count had shown one man missing.

As *The New York Times* reported it, "Just before leaving the office the commissioner called the raiding party together and issued brief instructions. 'No rough stuff unless it's necessary,' he warned, 'but if it is necessary make it good and rough. If you have to smack a man, smack him so hard the other prisoners can hear the blow. Don't touch off any powder magazine, though. God help the man

and sharpened butter knives, plus "radio sets," rugs, canes, glass-topped tables, and electric stoves. Bread, canned food, and an eight-pound piece of corned beef were found, too; MacCormick later suggested they were stolen by inmates, then traded to gang members for drugs. (A year later, mature marijuana plants were found growing on the Island; they had probably been cultivated by prisoners assigned outside duty.)

Marcus led a party into the dormitory hospital, Cleary's quarters in the prison's workhouse building, then did the same in Rao's digs in the prison hospital. *The Times* listed "boxes of expensive cigars, silk shirts and underwear and costly dressing gowns" among the items found there. MacCormick ordered narcotics addicts out of the prison's west

New York Times headline

DEPUTY WARDEN SEIZED

Ring Is Taken Unaware as MacCormick Uses Ruse to Hide Plans.

THUGS LIVING IN LUXURY

wing, transferring them to the Charity Hospital on the Island, then discovered "a considerable quantity of paper soaked in what was believed to be a heroin solution."

Of the dozens of gang members, *The Times* wrote, "It was the first time that most of them had seen the inside of a cell during their stay on the Island."

The Times reported, "Mr. Marcus and his squad went to a cell block in the south part of the prison where a search brought to light an altogether different line of contraband. Rouge, powder, mascara, perfume, even a woman's wig, were confiscated. Several of the inmates of this cell block affected long hair. Silk undergarments were found in the cells."

All in all, MacCormick's raiders found all they needed to justify a statement by a former Commissioner of Corrections, by then a National Broadcasting Company executive, who said, "For a matter of fifteen months there has been little discipline in the prisons."

Perhaps the only disappointment was Rao's guard dog, Screw Hater. The animal turned out to be a frightened German shepherd puppy.

More on this aspect of Roosevelt Island history, including pulp-magazine treatment (see below) is available on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2120/history/eltman.html, nyc10044.com/wire/2120/history/hist2120.html, and in the *TimeLine* at nyc10044.com/timeln/timeline.html.



In an editorial cartoon by Jerry Doyle from the early part of last Century, Father Knickerbocker, as the symbol of New York City, lifts a dripping garbage-can lid, labeled "Tammany Politics," off a Welfare Island Prison stinking of "racketeer control," "moral filth," and "favoritism abuses," while the District Attorney is seen as viewing all this through the wrong end of a telescope and is quoted as saying, "No legal evidence has been uncovered."

who does that."

MacCormick issued orders denying Island access, via the warehouse elevator from the Queensboro Bridge, to anyone whose destination was the prison.

At the prison, MacCormick put the deputy warden under arrest, later explaining, "I can't trust him for a minute." With David Marcus, his first deputy, and squads of guards, MacCormick then led a cell-by-cell search, uncovering contraband weapons ranging from a surgeon's scalpel through razor blades



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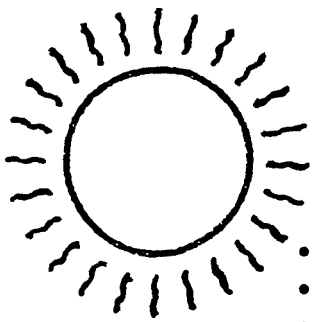


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The Old Timers Top row, left to right – Kevin Brown, Harold Burrows, Mark Cagle, Arnold Swaby, Lyle Kane, Tony Simmons. Bottom row – Kwasi Long, Steve Long, KJ Crews, Charles Cagle.



The All Stars Top row, left to right – Anthony Simmons, Chris Chatman, Lamar Burrows. 3rd row – Paul Brown, Tyrell Anderson, Sika Franco, John McNeil. 2nd row – Jim Armenakis (coach), Remy Armenakis, Shirome Dixon. 1st row – Melvin Gager, Anthony Pompey. Missing – Quincy Leon, Karam Hider, Andrew Rousseau.

Classified

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Basketball On Friday, April 2, the Senior (15-17-year-old) *All Stars* played the coaches, the *Old Timers*, for bragging rights. The trash talk started weeks before, with the coaches putting the *All Stars* on notice that “spin moves” and fancy dribbling would not work against the “old pros” and that the game was going to be “physical.” The *All Stars* countered that the *Old Timers* better be prepared to run.

The *Old Timers*, coached by Steve Marcus, hoped to control the boards and the paint with strong physical play. The *All Stars*, coached by Jim Armenakis, countered with a transition game that forced the pace. The *All Stars* also showed patience, and consistently passed the ball three or four times before they shot. The *All Stars* took command of the game early on, took a 12-point lead, and never lost control of the game.

The second half followed the pattern of the first half until the last ten minutes, when the *Old Timers* finally caught their stride and went into an effective “box and one” trapping zone which slowed down the *All Stars* and caused a number of turnovers that gave them the lead.

The *All Stars* called a time-out and countered with a 1-3-1 full-court zone press, which rattled the *Old Timers*, causing a number of turnovers that enabled the *All Stars* to take back the lead 76-71 with 20 seconds left to play. Harold Burrows, who was covered brilliantly by Sika Franco (holding him to 7 points in the first half) was fouled behind the 3-point line. Burrows made all three of his foul shots to put the score at 76-74. The *Old Timers* put up a full court press, causing a turnover, which enabled Burrows to scramble and hit a desperation 3-pointer that was all net. The score was now 77-76 in favor of the *Old Timers*.

The *All Stars* took the ball out at mid-court and spread the court, relying on their speed. Chris Chatman got to the ball and drove to the basket for a last-second shot. He went up in the air and just as he was about to release the ball, three defenders, KJ Crews, Harold Burrows, and Tony Simmons all went up to block the shot. Chatman faked the shot and brilliantly passed the ball underneath to Sika Franco who made the basket to win the game 78-77. Pandemonium erupted with all the young people in the stands cheering.

The game was memorable, emotional, and a testament to the coaches who have devoted countless hours and years of effort to help develop these young men into the fine athletes they have become. The *All Stars* showed a great deal of intelligence, poise, composure, patience, unselfishness, and confidence that they could get the job done. The *Old Timers* also showed fierce determination, perseverance, and guts, despite the fact that one player was seen throwing up during the game and several appeared ready to spit out a lung. (The names have been intentionally withheld to protect the guilty.) While this game had all the earmarks of generational warfare, as fathers played against their sons and teachers against their students, at the end of the day there was immeasurable pride that these young men have come of age.

The *All Stars* team included: Chris Chatman (18 points), Anthony Simmons (15), Lamar Burrows (14), Paul Brown (14), Melvin Gager (7), John McNeil (4), Shirome Dixon (4), Sika Franco (2), Tyrell Anderson, Remy Armenakis, Anthony Pompey. Karam Hider, Andrew Rousseau and Quincy Leon were not present.

The *Old Timers* team included: Harold Burrows (27 points), KJ Crews (20), Tony Simmons (16), Kevin Brown (5), Lyle Kane (4), Charlie Cagle (3), Kwasi Long (2), Arnold Swaby, Steve Long, and Mark Cagle.

Special thanks to Youth Program and Charlie DeFino for putting this event together for our community.

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Photo Exhibit Has an Island Connection

Island-related photographic art of Arthur Tress will be exhibited this month and next at a Manhattan gallery (see *ComingUp*, page 3). They had a unique genesis, which Tress describes in materials accompanying the exhibit:

"The chance discovery on New York's Welfare Island one afternoon in 1984 of a boarded-up, five-hundred-room training hospital filled with half a century's worth of discarded municipal medical equipment came as a unique opportunity for me. My last still lifes had become more grandiose in their combination of graffiti-like painting with sculptural forms. Over the next three years, climbing in twice a week through a broken second-floor window, I converted the vast operating and emergency rooms into my own working studio and private museum. I completed more than sixty room-sized installations from the basement locker rooms to the rooftop sanitarium. Wearing a protective mask and using canned aerosol colors, I developed elaborate spray stencil techniques on assemblages of iron lungs, X-ray machines, incubators, blood sampling machines, and rehabilitation baths and transformed those rusty horrors into Kafkaesque kindergarten furniture. In the dim gray light they seemed like ancient and sacred grave offerings for my own mausoleum. During all the time I was working no one ever discovered me using the building or came to see the actual pieces. The building has since been torn down, and the only record of this strange obsession are the photographs."



Library Helping With Voter Registrations

by Mary Camper-Titsingh

The Main Street branch of the New York Public Library has voter-registration forms on hand, and staff members are able to help visitors register via the library's computers. Library hours are Monday and Wednesday, 12-8; Thursday 11-6; Friday, 1-6; and Saturday, 10-5; closed Tuesday and Sunday.

Residents can also use the library's computers for e-mail and on-line searches, and wireless (Wi-Fi) access is also available in the branch.

A wide variety of other services is also available:

- Age-specific sections for children and teens
- Movies (VHS, DVD)
- Audio tapes
- Easy ordering of books from other branches and the central library
- Large-print books, talking books, and Braille books
- Full complement of daily newspapers (and a *WIRE* archive)
- Foreign-language books
- Personal reading machines and TV-screen enlargers
- Extensive on-line services, including
 - Health and medicine databases
 - New York City services on jobs, day-care networks, victim services, volunteer opportunities
 - Practice tests for professional and civil-service licensing tests
 - Extensive business-specific journals

Staff members are available to answer questions and assist with the available technology.

Katz from page 3

has encouraged my efforts and provided invaluable guidance. Thanks, Dan!

There are two terrific Island events happening today. The first is the RIRA Insurance Fair. From noon to 2:00 p.m., we have provided a group of experts from the NYPD, FDNY, the Insurance Information Institute, and Housing Management to talk about apartment safety and to answer your questions about insuring your home. In addition, we have invited representatives from State Farm, Allstate, and Travelers as well as our own Seymour Williams, who will allow you to comparison-shop under one roof at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. For those of you unable to make a Saturday event, we have scheduled a second session for Wednesday, April 28, at 7:30 p.m. If you don't have apartment insurance, come learn why you should. And if you do have insurance, come see how your premiums compare with other providers.

Following the Insurance Fair on Saturday and continuing on Sunday afternoon, the Historical Society is presenting the Roosevelt Island Film Festival. You must have seen the posters, newspaper ads, nudges at the Farmers Market (hi, Judy!), handbills, palm cards, billboards, loudspeaker trucks, and sky writing (well, perhaps I exaggerate) that for weeks now have subtly announced this event. I know I get a thrill every time I see the Tram on a large or small screen even if it involves Rutger Hauer tossing one of my movie-land neighbors out the door over the East River. Find a time and a program that tickles your fancy. I'll see you at the movies!

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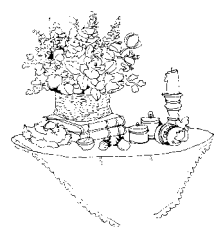
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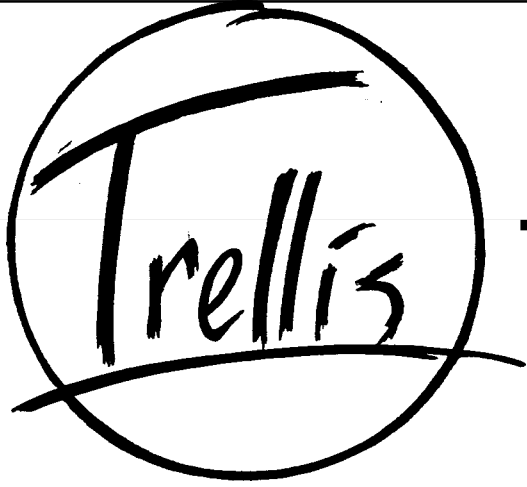
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Monsoon Season

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