

Next issue
in 3 weeks –
Sat., Mar. 4

The Main Street **WIRE**™

26th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Photo: Trevor Augustus Brown

Grandpa Al Lewis Is Dead – A Character Actor, He Was Also An Activist with Real Character

by Sharon Bermon

Al Lewis, best known for his iconic role as Grandpa Munster in the hit television series *The Munsters* but also a familiar presence on Main Street, died in his Roosevelt Island apartment on February 3 with his wife and partner, Karen Ingenthron at his side. He had been in failing health for several years following a mishap during routine surgery.

Recognized everywhere he went and loved by millions, Lewis was one of a select group of celebrities who used his fame to promote a cause. For Al Lewis, candidate for governor of New York in 1998, a popular talk show host on the progressive radio station WBAI, and an activist who picketed Albany for years urging reform of the

Rockefeller drug laws, the cause was social justice. He was the rare performer who was able to transcend the limits of his profession.

But Al Lewis was first and foremost a *personality*. From Karen Ingenthron: "Al loved being a performer. He liked nothing more than making people laugh. He thought that was his purpose in life, because laughter is healing." His talent appeared effortless, but he worked at it, studying for 18 years with the method-acting coach Paul Mann.

Al Lewis was always on stage, most famously the small screen of television, first as Officer Leo Schnauzer in his first hit show, *Car 54, Where Are You?* from 1961 to 1963, and then, after a year, reunited with his *Car 54* co-star, Fred Gwynne, this time playing the classic Grandpa Munster, along with a cast that included Gwynne as the hapless Herman, the child Eddie and the daughter Marilyn. The show made him famous. Decades after *The Munsters* went off the air, Lewis was recognized by his fans wherever he went.

Capri Pizza Shut

RIOC has evicted Capri Pizza for non-payment of rent. The store is padlocked and a Marshal's notice is posted in the window.

Group Seeks Participants for Emergency Response Training

by Linda Heimer

A group of about 20 Islanders eager to participate in eleven weeks of Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) wants to expand the size of the group to 30 or 40 or more in order to qualify for on-Island sessions.

The training is done by the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) one night a week in sessions running two to three hours. Island sessions will start the week of March 6 (specific evening to be determined).

Rivercross resident Vicki Feinmel is collecting names. To express interest and receive notification about program specifics, call her at **212-223-1108** by Friday, February 17. The training is free and open only to those 18 and over. Participants get a free emergency "go-bag" upon completion of the course.

The CERT concept originated in Los Angeles. It recognizes that in a catastrophic disaster, citizens may be on their own for a time while waiting for help, and need to help themselves, their families, and their neighbors. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) took the program nationwide.

Participants in the program incur no obligation in terms of emergency response, but learn emergency coordination procedures, some basic triage, basic first aid, and how to communicate with responding agencies in emergency situations. Participants are subjected to a background check.

The program includes an annual refresher course, and missed sessions can be made up at the end of the course.

Public Meeting Thursday Night

Residents Assn Blasts RIOC For Haphazard Development

The Residents Association (RIRA) has lambasted the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) for abandoning community planning in its most recent development moves.

RIRA's Common Council has adopted a position paper concluding that RIOC's most recent offering of development parcels on the Island, and its intent to sell off retail space and its Motorgate inter-

est to private parties, amount to an abandonment of key qualities that make the Island a desirable place to live.

"The Residents Association... has serious objections to each of these proposals and to RIOC's approach to its development and management responsibilities in general," says the position paper, which is reprinted in this issue of *The WIRE* in *The RIRA Column* on page 3. The paper decries RIOC's repeated departures from the Island's General Development Plan (GDP) without creating a replacement plan. "These new [development] proposals have been formulated without any public discussion on RIOC's vision of how the Island should be developed; how residents, workers, or visitors will access and exit the Island; or how its commercial property and public facilities should be managed. In other words, RIOC has chosen to ignore the GDP without ever discussing how it should be replaced."

The paper goes on to suggest that RIOC's latest offerings have the earmarks of a last-minute deal by the outgoing Pataki administration: "In private discussions with some of the resident RIOC Board members, [we have learned that] these proposals were created and marketed without their knowledge or approval. One can only conclude that they were formulated as last-minute giveaways by the Governor's office and the DHCR." The paper criticizes RIOC's cur-

rent planning on seven points:

- Reduction in economic, racial, and ethnic diversity
- Failure to consider transportation needs
- Loss of parkland and recreational facilities
- Loss of the steam plant
- Parking, delivery, and shopper concerns for a proposed "big box" retailer
- Possible loss of vital commercial services
- Lack of an overall plan

The paper was just made available for publication. RIOC has issued no response but has rarely responded to such pronouncements by the Residents Association. In his last *RIOC Column* for *The WIRE*, however, RIOC President Herb Berman wrote, "...the financial structure underpinning our Island is often misrepresented or misunderstood by some Island activists." He concluded the column, "We encourage you to attend the RIOC Board meetings and join in the discussion about the future of our Island." However, only a handful of RIOC Board meetings each year invite resident comment, and then only after a meeting has concluded with votes taken and decisions made.

RIOC's real-estate consultant, who receives commissions on his deals, will present the results of the most recent foray into the real-estate market in a public session Thursday (February 16) at 6:00 p.m., in Good Shepherd Community Center.

Progress on 2nd Avenue Subway Raises Questions For Island Commuting

by Selwa Habib

A new Second Avenue subway line will bring relief to Roosevelt Island commuters and F Train riders. Or will it?

A map issued by the MTA indicates that Roosevelt Island riders will still face the rush-hour's overcrowded F train, at least from here to 63rd/Lex, where the F will offer transfers to the T or Q on the proposed Second Avenue line.

It's possible that trains passing through Roosevelt Island will actually become more crowded as Queens passengers choose the F line for its transfer access to the Second Avenue line.

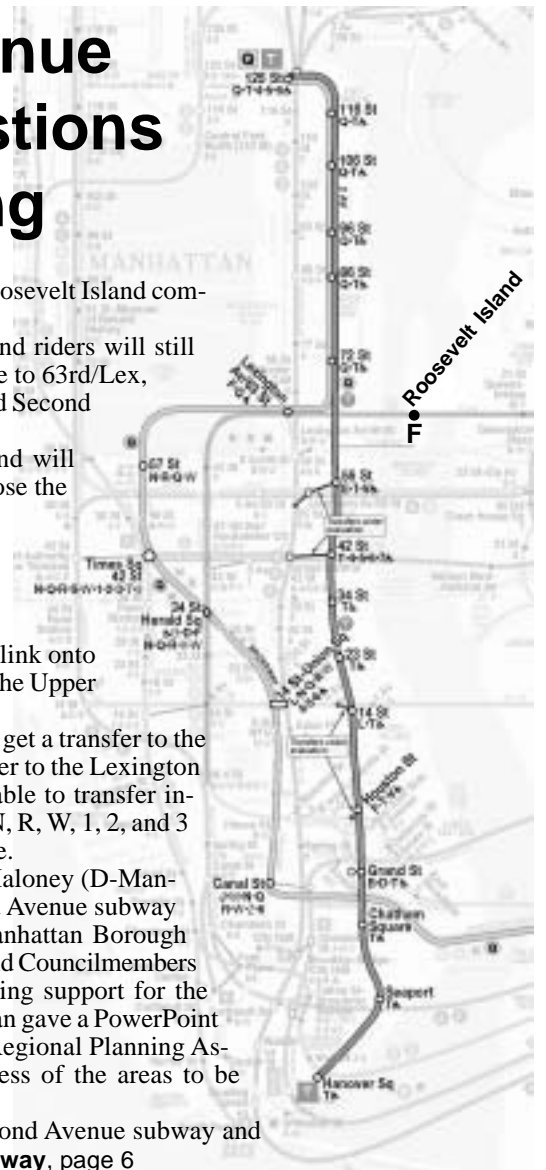
The full length of the Second Avenue subway project from 125th Street to the World Trade Center has been divided into minimal operating segments consisting of four phases. The first phase will include stops at 72nd, 86th, and 96th Streets. At the 63rd/Lex stop, the new T line will link onto the existing Q line, providing riders a no-transfer ride from the Upper East Side to Times Square, Wall Street, and Brooklyn.

F Train riders will not need to ride down to 47th Street to get a transfer to the west side, nor would they need to leave the station to transfer to the Lexington Avenue line at 59th Street and Lexington. They will be able to transfer in-station, at 63rd Street, to the Q, which will link them to the N, R, W, 1, 2, and 3 trains on the West Side, and the 4, 5, and 6 on the East Side.

On Saturday, January 28, Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney (D-Manhattan, Queens) discussed progress in planning the Second Avenue subway at a town-hall meeting held on the Upper East Side. Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, Assemblymember Jonathan Bing, and Councilmembers Jessica Lappin and Dan Garodnick joined her in expressing support for the projects. The MTA's Joseph Petrocelli and Audrey Heffernan gave a PowerPoint presentation on the project, and Christopher Jones of the Regional Planning Association discussed its importance to the economic success of the areas to be served.

Maloney expressed optimism about progress. "The Second Avenue subway and

See **Subway**, page 6



Grandpa from page 1

continuing after *The Munsters* went off the air. Lewis opened a restaurant with two partners in the Village. "Grandpa" was a success and allowed the genial host to once again play the role he loved — entertainer. And he loved putting on the Grandpa costume and making appearances, often with his *Munsters* co-stars. Halloween was his busiest season, naturally, but people were always eager to be in the presence of the famous Grandpa Munster.

Neal Altman of Abrams Artists Agency, Lewis's long-time agent said, "A lot of celebrities tend to shy away from personal appearances, but Al loved them. I've never seen a guy who was so loved by people — and who loved being around people. It was never about the money. Al was truly a character in the most wonderful sense of the word. Damon Runyon couldn't write a character like Al Lewis."

Grandpa, as so many knew him, made an indelible impression on everyone he worked with. To Howard Stern, he was "awesome, one of the most brilliant comedy actors in the world, and we will never see the likes of him again."

When a publisher of children's books put out a line of scary books to encourage kids to read, Al was delighted to be spokesperson. Roy Wandelmaier, now an editor at Scholastic, reminisced about the time Al came to promote *Deadtime* (Get it? — *Deadtime*, not *bedtime*) Books. He walked into a room of corporate publishing types,

dressed in full Grandpa costume. Decades later, Wandelmaier remembered the way Lewis "captured and captivated the large crowd," and, speaking without notes, charmed everyone in the room." Karen Ingthron still has the series of books, and remembers how pleased Al was to use his celebrity to promote reading for children. A voracious reader himself, Lewis often bragged that he read a book a day.

When old friends and colleagues reminisce about Al, they always talk about his personal generosity to colleagues down on their luck. Al would offer to accept a smaller fee for his appearances at Munster events so that other former Munster actors could appear and be paid. When WBAI fired staff, Lewis was one of the first to contribute to a fund for laid-off staffers.

Colleagues remember other aspects of Al Lewis, notably his penchant for phrases often associated with small rooms with lots of porcelain and shiny chrome. Butch Patrick (Eddie Munster) remembers fondly the time that he, Lewis and John Wayne were eating in the Universal Studios commissary. Commenting on Wayne's roles, Lewis said, "Duke, your career has been a series of bowel movements. First you killed Japs, then you killed Indians, then more Japs, then more Indians. You call that a career?"

He wasn't loved by everyone. Randy Credico, a political comedian and Director of the Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice, often accompanied Al to correctional facilities, trying to provide support for prisoners who were caught by the

Rockefeller drug laws. Credico remembers the time that the NYS Commissioner of Corrections banned Lewis from attending a rally at a prison. After that, for years, Lewis reviled Commissioner Goord on his WBAI program, calling him "a fat piece of crap" and other phrases that barely passed FCC muster. In spite of that, or perhaps because of it, Lewis was one of the most popular hosts on WBAI. Program manager Bernard White said the station kept his Saturday noon spot open for the last few years, in the hopes that he would be able to return. Sadly, that will not happen, but the station has scheduled a memorial service on February 18 at Riverside Church.

When Al Lewis was 13, he ran off to join the circus. It was just for the summer, and it wasn't a very glamorous job. He was assigned to clean up after the elephants. The animals did what they do, and young Al walked behind with a shovel, trying to keep the Big Top clean. That first taste of show business hooked him. Sixty years later, he was still trying to clean up, only this time it was a political system that he believed in, but found seriously flawed. Famous for his use of four letter words, he will be remembered most for pointing out where the sh*t was and cleaning it up — except that in his later years, he walked behind politicians who were both elephants and donkeys.

Wherever Al Lewis is now, he's still using four-letter words and still trying to make the world cleaner. Even angels sometimes make mistakes.

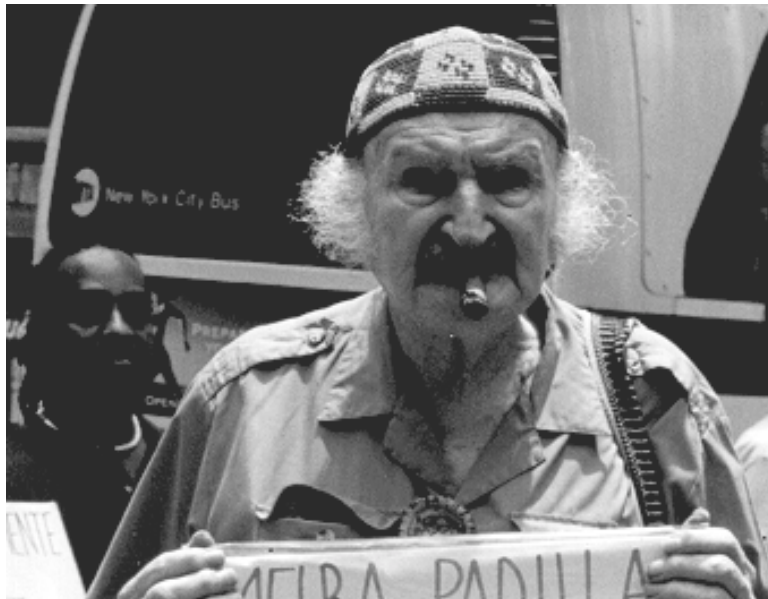
Q: What Makes Al Lewis Run? A: He's Not Just Another Pretty Face

The WIRE published this article on Al Lewis on July 4, 1998. With additional photographs, the full article is available on Website NYC10044 in the WIRE archive.

by Sharon Berman

Less than ten minutes into his weekly call-in show, Al Lewis is fighting the good fight against the forces of greed, stupidity, and — this particular day — gradualism. He has already suggested that the *New York Post* should come in strips so he can use it in his bathroom. Adamantly opposed to the Yankees' proposed move to Manhattan ("all the teams combined pay only \$500,000 a year in taxes"), he accuses Mayor Giuliani of brown-nosing George Steinbrenner — but with language that is considerably more graphic and anatomically descriptive.

Tapping his feet, bouncing up and down in his chair in time to the music, trading quips with his dreadlocked engineer, Brother Shine, Lewis takes calls from listeners who have made his Saturday noon call-in show the most popular program on WBAI's weekend



schedule. His approach: to educate, enrage, and enlarge the minds of his listeners by calling attention to the failings of as many local and national institutions as possible.

And he loves every minute of it. With good reason. A performer since the age of thirteen, Al Lewis is auditioning for the biggest role of his career. At 88, he's running for

Governor of New York, having spent his entire life preparing for a job that combines his two great passions: performing, and social justice.

Wait a minute. Al Lewis? *Grandpa Munster? Grandpa?*

Roosevelt Island residents who thought they knew all there was to know about Al Lewis have had their ideas turned upside down in recent weeks. Grandpa was a fixture, someone to point out to Island visitors. Often as not, sitting on a beach chair on Main Street or hanging out at Trellis chewing the fat with his cronies. With his ever present cigar, 60's pony tail and well-worn clothes, he was... well, eccentric. Not at all like another famous Island House resident, the impeccably dressed Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the U.N. But on a recent day, there was Al Lewis, wearing a beautifully tailored, double-breasted, dark blue suit. His hair pulled neatly back, the only evidence of his sartorial individuality a broad-brimmed Western hat, he

See Lewis, page 7

Islander Lael Freeman died January 27. The WIRE has been unable to reach family members for obituary information.

Letters Policy

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

Preferred method of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file), 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, but allow extra time before deadline for typesetting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. All letters are subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity. Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

Letters deadline for Mar. 4 issue: Tues., Feb. 28

Letters received after deadline are considered on a space-available basis.

Letters

To the Editor:

Let me comment on three misleading points made in RIOC President Herbert Berman's last column (January 28) which purports to explain the Island's financial structure that he claims is "often misrepresented or misunderstood by some Island activists."

1. First, Mr. Berman incorrectly asserts that RIOC "owns the land beneath the buildings." The City of New York owns the land, not RIOC. Under a "Master Lease," the City leased it in 1969 for 99 years to UDC, a predecessor of RIOC. In 2006, some 62 years from now, all that has been created here by UDC/RIOC, as well as all of the residential buildings, must be turned over to the City.

2. Secondly, Mr. Berman misleadingly asserts that "since owners leaving Mitchell-Lama require additional capital to finance a purchase or upgrade the building — they want to extend ground leases to meet financial institutions' lending requirements." While some buildings may seek mortgages to pay for capital improvements, they seek to leave the Mitchell-Lama system mainly to unlock the market value of their apartments. The present ground leases of three buildings (Westview, Island House and Rivercross) expire in 22 years; trying to sell apartments with such a short life creates little market value. Having another 40-year extension of their ground leases, however, will create substantial market value. As for financing capital improvements, the buildings do not have to leave the Mitchell-Lama system to obtain outside financing if they are financially sound; if not, they will still not be able to obtain such funds. Leaving the system does require each building to pay off its State mortgages. To do that, buildings will seek new private mortgages that expire before the ground leases. The longer the ground lease, the easier it is to obtain a new private mortgage.

3. Finally, Mr. Berman asserts that RIOC "takes very seriously our commitment to Island residents to maintain the mixed community we have been for the last 37 years." It is not RIOC's commitment to Island residents that is at issue but rather its Master Lease obligation with the City which has a "General Development Plan" that RIOC must adhere to. The GDP mandates a mixed-income Island community

To the Editor:

Over the last two weeks or so, the Red Bus service has been terrible. The buses have been running as much as 20 minutes apart during both morning and evening rush hours.

On a recent morning, I was at the bus stop at the Deli at 7:30 a.m. Another rider was waiting when I got there. The bus didn't arrive till 7:50. When it did, only three people were able to board. When we questioned the bus driver, he said two buses were in the garage and couldn't move, so evidently there was only one bus running.

I thought Roosevelt Island had new buses that they were getting ready to place into service prior to Valentine's Day.

Last Saturday night we got off the Tram at 11pm and there wasn't any Red Bus at the Tram. Finally the MTA bus came along and stopped.

It appears that, with subway-bound and Tram-bound buses now starting their runs at the Octagon, there will be no rush-hour space, let alone seats, for anyone south of Manhattan Park.

RIOC needs to address these issues. Let's not have a repeat performance of the fiasco two winters ago, when they completely screwed up the bus system during the coldest weather, without asking drivers or residents for comments beforehand.

Rosemary Dringus

Editor's note: The WIRE took round trips on two Red Buses earlier this week. The timing of each stop, with delays, are available with this issue of The WIRE on Website NYC10044 at nyc10044.com.

and permits only a limited percentage of apartments to be conventionally financed "market rate", currently 25% in Northtown and, due to a recent amendment, now 60% in Southtown. RIOC's extending the ground leases for Westview, Island House and Rivercross until 2068 will allow those buildings over time to become fully market rate, pushing the 25% up probably to more than 80%, thus essentially eliminating the mixed income community. To allow that to happen, RIOC must seek an amendment to the GDP.

Robert Chira

The writer, a longtime resident, practices law in Manhattan.

Additional letters on page 6

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The Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association has adopted this Position Paper on RIOC's Proposed Real Estate Initiatives:

Overview

Roosevelt Island is a special community – an Island of calm in a busy City, a diverse community in a City of ethnic enclaves, and an affordable community in a City of increasing wealth. We are losing this character because we lack basic representation and zoning protections, or any control over the way we are governed.

The RIRA Column

RIOC [the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation], the Island's governing body, is a State authority controlled by a Board appointed by the Governor. They have recently authorized a real-estate firm to formulate and market five proposals for Roosevelt Island.

The proposals include

three development plans:

- 1) To erect a structure on the east parking lot of Coler hospital of up to 24 floors.
 - 2) To raze the Steam Generation plant, Sportspark and the Tennis Bubble in order to build a commercial facility. The winning bidder can also incorporate the Tram station in its design proposal. "Big box" stores are specifically encouraged.
 - 3) To develop the northern portion of Southpoint Park for a commercial or residential development.
- Two additional plans involve removing RIOC from facilities management of almost any kind:
- 4) To sell RIOC's entire interest (of 60%) in Motorgate garage.
 - 5) To sell RIOC's management and leasing rights to all storefront properties on Main Street.

The Residents Association, as an elected body representing the interests of the residents on Roosevelt Island, has serious objections to each of these proposals and to RIOC's approach to its development and management responsibilities in general.

Development & Zoning

The General Development Plan (GDP) was the blueprint for Island housing, commercial development, and parkland for close to 40 years. Written in 1968 by the foremost city planners and architects of their time, the plan has well served the residents and the City that surrounds it. The plan stipulates that a maximum of 5,100 units be constructed on two defined areas of Northtown and Southtown. The rental mix was set at 80% affordable housing and 20% market.

In recent years, RIOC has chosen to entirely ignore these fundamental requirements. RIOC, a State authority whose board is appointed by the governor, successfully lobbied the Mayor to amend the GDP. The Octagon development was authorized for construction. Although the project restores a landmark, it also privatizes parkland. Most importantly, the development is only 20% affordable, a reversal of the GDP's 80% requirement. In addition, Southtown was authorized, which has, to date, no provisions for middle or lower income residents. When Southtown is completed, there will be 6,000 units on the Island, and residents will have been stripped of any zoning protection once afforded by the GDP.

These new proposals have been formulated without any public discussion on RIOC's vision of how the Island should finally be developed; how residents, workers, or visitors will

access and exit the Island; or how its commercial property and public facilities should be managed. In other words, RIOC has chosen to ignore the GDP without ever discussing how it should be replaced.

In private discussions with some of the resident RIOC Board members, we have learned that these proposals were created and marketed without their knowledge or approval. One can only conclude that they were formulated as last-minute giveaways by the Governor's office and the DHCR.

As residents and taxpayers, we have the right to demand that plans for our community be carefully thought out by those who want to make these changes. They should be endorsed by our political representatives, who, along with their constituents, should be given ample input and control over the final result.

Specific Concerns

- 1) Lack of an overall plan
Each of these development plans violates the General Development Plan. If RIOC chooses to ignore this plan, carefully formulated by world-renowned experts, they need to replace it with a comprehensive plan that defines their vision for permanent and untouchable open spaces, what sorts of recreational facilities are to be maintained, how residents and visitors will enter and leave the Island, and a complete plan for emergency contingencies. A reasonable plan would also clearly address their financial requirements, and how much they will be receiving for the land and facilities they will be selling off and, particularly, why it is necessary to take these steps immediately.
- 2) Transportation
As an Island, Roosevelt Island has limited points of access and egress. Transportation decisions need to be carefully thought through. In addition to concerns about emergency preparedness, it is apparent that the Island's train, Tram and road facilities are severely overburdened during rush-hour periods. RIRA does not understand how our bridge and single-lane road can accommodate the deliveries and visitors



Steve Marcus, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.
e-mail: SteveAtRIRA@verizon.net

to a "big box" store such as a Wal-Mart or Target. Current residential growth is also of concern. Commuters know that they frequently cannot get into packed F trains, and Main Street is choked with traffic when school buses arrive and hospital shifts change. Furthermore, a small change made to the Red Bus route last year caused the quality of this service to significantly degrade. Although the Octagon developer has discussed building a ferry pier near his site, it is not clear whether such a service is likely to be instituted, or how much relief it could provide.

RIOC has never offered a plan to ameliorate these problems, to quantify the negative consequences of additional population, or to explain how it intends to transport people to and from the developments that are distant from the current Red Bus routes.

- 3) Loss of Recreational Facilities and Parkland
Three separate RIOC plans include commercial develop-
- See RIRA, page 6

There are outdoor tennis courts and the indoor courts at the privately-owned tennis center. The promenade that circumnavigates the Island has become a popular track for walking, running and bicycling.

Central to the recreational amenities is the Sportspark, which is large enough to accommodate indoor basketball and soccer. The swimming pool also has inaugurated a program of open swim times appropriate for all ages that we encourage residents to take advantage of.



Herbert E. Berman, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.
e-mail: HBerman@rioc.com

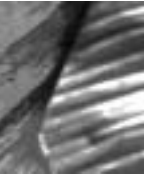
attended, and we encourage more residents to check the website and join in the exercise and fun.

These amenities exist for the benefit of our residents. So whether you seek to improve your mind or your body, or hopefully both, we urge you to take advantage of what your home community offers.

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Double Take, a one-artist show by Esther Piaskowski Cohen, continuing through February 19 at Gallery RIVAA, 6-9 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.▷



Formal Institution of Rev. Lewis C. Johnson as Vicar, Church of the Good Shepherd, **Sun., Feb. 12**, 4:00 p.m., at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, 543 Main Street; reception following.

– The Coming Week –

Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Feb. 13**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Community Board 8 meeting, **Wed., Feb. 15**, 6:30-9:00, New York Blood Center Auditorium, 310 East 67th St. Information: **212-758-4340** or www.cb8m.com.

RIOC Town Hall Meeting to present the results of RIOC offerings of several Island properties for investment and development, including a portion of Southpoint Park, **Thur., Feb. 16**, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center.

PTA International Dinner, **Thur., Feb. 16**, 6:00 p.m., PS/IS 217. For information, call **718-726-8937**.

Book Discussion Group, **Thur., Feb. 16**, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali.

– Future Events –

The Regents (*Barbara Ann*, 1961) in concert, **Sat., Feb. 25**, 8:00 p.m., PS/IS 217 Auditorium, sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Youth Program's PS/IS 217 Beacon.▷



Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Feb. 27**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Community Board 8 Speaks, television program, **Tue., Feb. 28**, 7:00 p.m., Manhattan Neighborhood Network Channel 34 (Time Warner system).

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., Mar. 4, 2006**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Thursday, Feb. 23; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, **Mon., Feb. 27**; they are due **Thur., Mar. 2**.

Future issues: **Mar. 18, Apr. 8 and 22, May 6 and 20, June 3 and 17, July 1, July 29, Aug. 26, Sept. 9 and 23, Oct. 7 and 21, Nov. 4 and 18, Dec. 2 and 16.** **News phone, 212-826-9055;** urgent matters **917-617-0449.** **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214.** **To list your organization's Island-related event in this column,** e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions. There is no charge for such listings.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com or leave information at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please provide a phone number for possible follow-up.

Game Night, **Sun., Mar. 5**, 7:00 p.m., Senior Center (546 Main Street), a fundraising event sponsored by the Eastwood Building Committee

Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Mar. 13**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Book Discussion Group, **Thur., Mar. 23**, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. *Love* by Toni Morrison.

Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Mar. 27**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Book Discussion Group, **Thur., Apr. 20**, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. *Bodega Dreams* by Ernesto Quiñonez.

Book Discussion Group, **Thur., May 18**, 6:30 p.m., at the Library. *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini.

Senior Center

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Monday
9:30, Yoga
10-11:30, English as 2nd Language
10:30, Blood Pressure Screening
12:30, "Oldies" Movies
1:00, Tai Chi
7:00, Dance Class (Beginners)</p> <p>Tuesday
9:30-1:00, Free Tax Help
10:00, Chinese Massage
10:30, Shoppers' Bus
2:00, Bingo
2:00, Painting & Sculpting
7:30, Games (RISA)</p> <p>Wednesday
9:15, Stay Well
10:00, Heart Health Care
10:30, Computers
10:30, Shoppers' Bus
7:00, Pokeno (RISA)</p> | <p>Thursday
10:00, Get Stronger Bones
10:30, Creative Arts
12:30, Movie</p> <p>Friday
9:30, Yoga
10:30, Computers
1:00, Bridge
7:00, Games (RISA)</p> <p>Saturday
7:30, Bingo (RISA)</p> |
|---|---|

Special Events

- Tue., Feb. 14**, 6:00, Valentine's Day Party
Wed., Feb. 15, Atlantic City trip
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The RIOC Column

resident. The Chapel of the Good Shepherd, with its magnificent rotunda, has become a regular meeting place for Island residents.

Now we are about to add a new historic presence on the Island in the Octagon Tower, with a renovation nearly completed as part of the development of the Octagon apartment buildings. The Octagon is the surviving remnant of a 19th century mental hospital, a time when the City located many of its medical facilities on the Island.

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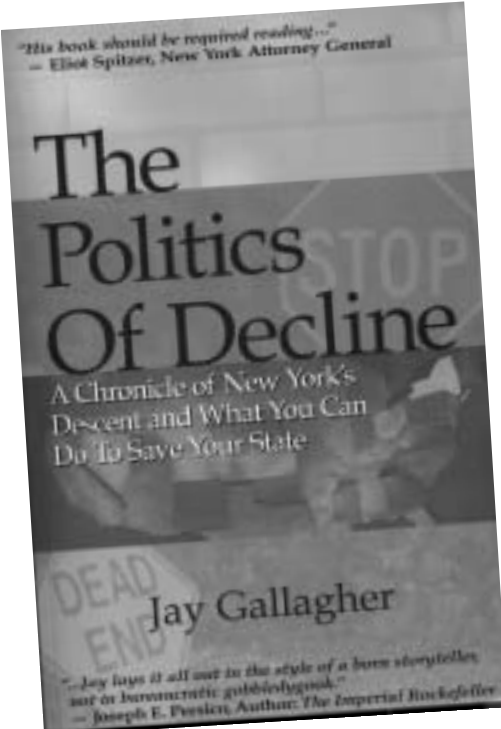

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Eliot Spitzer, New York Attorney General*

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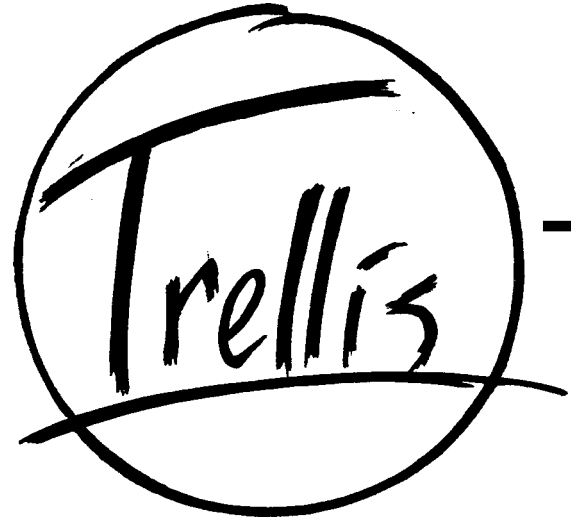
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February

The very name of the month suggests sluggishness, a kind of flubbing about, an unexciting “uary” that might as well be “statuary” or something else unmoving and cold. Is the best thing about February the fact that March is coming in soon and, we may hope, to take its lamb-like leave? Or is the best thing about February the hot coffee at Trellis that takes away the sting of cold?

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RISA Observes Korean New Year

by Linda Meyers

Roosevelt Islanders were treated to a magical evening of fellowship and good cheer by the Korean community on Saturday evening, February 4, at the Senior Center.

The food was delicious and the warm feelings that were generated were contagious.

Dolores Green, President of the Roosevelt Island Senior Association (RISA), introduced the evening that was to follow. Sonia Jang hosted.

A surprise was promised and no one was disappointed. Kyu-Kon Lee, the President of the Korean-American Society, presented an envelope containing almost \$500, all of the proceeds from the event, to the Eastwood Building Committee (EBC) Legal Fund. The entire amount was forwarded to the committee's attorney. The Chair of the Eastwood Building Committee, Fay Vass, announced that \$1500 is still owed. The next fundraiser for the Eastwood Building Committee will be held Saturday, March 4, with a Game Night with fun for all. The "famous Dominic (Sciallo)" received a plaque for his many years of service to the Korean-American community and the Senior Center.

Everyone at the event received a beautifully painted fan and fresh flowers were at each table. A colorful fashion show of Korean clothing rounded out this most exciting event!

Toastmasters 25th Anniversary

The Roosevelt Island Toastmasters International Speaking Club celebrated its 25th anniversary Monday night, January 23, at the Manhattan Grille. Marlene Flom was the Toastmaster and host of the evening. Joan Geier, the first president of the Roosevelt Island unit, was present, along with her husband, Walter. Some of the other original charter members were also present at the dinner: Bernie and Naomi Silverman, Sue Brown, Jill Burk, and Doris Chernik.

Marlene Flom and Sue Brown organized the evening program around the theme, Inspiration. Each group of four spoke on some aspect of inspiration. (In Toastmasters, every event becomes an opportunity to speak.)

The Roosevelt Island chapter meets on the second and fourth Monday of each month. For further information, call Doris Chernik at 212-751-9577.

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RIRA from page 3

ment in Southpoint Park, the area east of Coler, the land under Sportspark, the steam plant, and the tennis club. Such initiatives run exactly counter to reasonable public planning, which attempts to create more recreational options as the population increases.

Open space on Roosevelt Island, due to its proximity to Manhattan and spectacular waterfront vistas, is extraordinarily valuable. Were RIOC to reach out to qualified professionals, they might discover better ways to develop such land than with a 24-story building next to Lighthouse Park, a "big box" store next to the Tram, or a commercial and/or residential development in Southpoint park. Careful and creative planning could find solutions that are "tourist- and resident-friendly," and that make the Island a desirable destination for visitors.

4) Loss of Steam Plant

Several energy experts that live on Roosevelt Island have pitched to RIOC a plan to refurbish the steam plant with State funds. It may be possible to build a modern low-emissions 30 MW plant, with NYSERDA funds, that provides low-cost steam to Island residences and hospitals for heating, that can work "off the grid" to provide energy to the Island even in a blackout. Such a plan merits serious consideration before the plant is razed for a "big box" outlet.

5) Parking concerns

Whereas most communities in the five boroughs offer a variety of parking facilities or street parking options, Roosevelt Island has a single option – Motorgate. The fact that this facility is reasonably priced, and offers a discount for rooftop parkers and non-reserved spaces, was an important consideration for many residents who have moved here. Privatizing such a facility will result in higher rates. Car owners will have little or no recourse if the owner fails to provide proper maintenance and security. In this case, RIOC's sale of this monopoly to private interests represents a significant abdication of responsibility by a government agency that should have a charter to protect its constituents.

6) Possible loss of vital commercial services

Roosevelt Island has a high proportion of disabled and/or elderly residents who de-

pend on the local stores to provide for their basic needs. If RIOC contracts out full control of commercial real estate on Main Street, then, as with the privatization of Motorgate garage, we lose any ability to ensure that they will be sufficient to provide for the basic requirements of the most immobile of our neighbors.

7) Reduction in economic, racial and ethnic diversity

One of the things that sets Roosevelt Island apart from other neighborhoods is that our Island is economically and racially mixed. While New York City is known for its diversity, individual neighborhoods tend to be divided into ethnic and racial enclaves. This is not so on Roosevelt Island, where each building has a mix of people from around the world. It is known as a safe, lovely place to raise children in an atmosphere of tolerance, and we wish it to remain that way. Changing the affordability mix from 80% down to 20% or less materially changes the face of our community, and exacerbates the City-wide crisis in middle and lower-middle class housing.

The Role of our State Government

The residential community on Roosevelt Island was established thirty years ago under a visionary plan that served the community with great success. Those who moved here were willing to cede their rights of direct local representation for benevolent State management.

However, under the current administration, RIOC has chosen to privatize land and facilities, while at the same time denying residents any form of zoning protection.

While RIOC may see its primary or sole role as "real-estate management," it is, in fact, the sole form of government for Island residents. Ideally, RIOC would open its decision-making function to genuine input and control of the residents that they are charged to serve and protect. However, if RIOC feels that governing the Island is too onerous a task, we prefer that they permit elected City representatives to take over, rather than simply selling off large pieces of our community to private interests.

We are reaching out to our elected representatives and all other interested parties to help preserve the promise and ideals upon which our community was founded.

More Letters

Subway from page 1

East Side access are the most significant projects in New York City, and probably the nation... It's no longer a question of whether they will be built, but how fast."

Construction on an East Side Access (ESA) project has already begun. It will connect the Long Island Rail Road's (LIRR) Main and Port Washington lines in Queens to a new LIRR terminal beneath Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan. To cite a few blessings, the new connection will increase the LIRR's capacity into Manhattan, dramatically shorten travel time for Long Island commuters, and provide a new commuter rail station in Sunnyside, Queens.

A Second Avenue subway taskforce has been formed to oversee and ensure the proper implementation of the project. According to Petrocelli, contracts for the first phase covering the tunnel segment from 99th to 62nd Streets "will be awarded this year... and construction plans are well underway." He added that the first phase will be completed in six years, with a total estimate of \$3.8 billion. When this phase is completed, 202,000 riders are expected to board the new line each day.

Significant progress has been made in obtaining funding for the project, and last year New York voters approved \$450 million for the Second Avenue subway in the Transportation Bond Act; additionally, Maloney led efforts in Congress to direct \$25 million to the project (for a total of \$36.5 million in federal funding over the last six years). These funding infusions, combined with \$1.05 billion in funds previously authorized by the State, have put the MTA in a strong position to negotiate a full-funding agreement with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for a full federal match.

In discussing the Second Avenue subway in its Report on New Starts for FY2006, the FTA says that "it believes that this project should receive special funding consideration because it has earned a "highly recommended" rating, and the State and local financial investment in the project is unusually large." The FTA expects to make a full-funding agreement for East Side Access later this year, and to approve a final design request for the subway in the next few months, which will then put the project in position for a full-funding grant agreement.

To the Editor:

The Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce would like to thank our community, management, and organizations for their generous contributions for the holiday lights.

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Dr. Lawrence Itskowitch	50
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Island Newstand	50
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We Are One	50
Trellis	50
Fish Store	25

Any balance is paid by the Chamber.

Julia Palermo

To the Editor:

The Board of the Island House Tenants Association wishes to express our appreciation to all the wonderful volunteers who were so generous with their time during the recent IHTA Board election.

Because of your help and support, we were able to hold open and fair elections – critical to reaching our common goal of affordable housing for all. Thank you. We hope to be able to reciprocate in the future.

Volunteers included:
Sandy Newell, Coler-Goldwater
Joyce Mincheff, Eastwood
Mickey Bauer, Rivercross
Mary Camper-Titsingh, Rivercross
Ethel Romm, Rivercross
Ron Schuppert, Rivercross
Margie Smith, Rivercross
Erin Feely-Nahem, Westview
Sherie Helstein, Westview
Matthew Katz, Westview
Damon La Scot, Westview

Dorothy Davis, Chair, IHTA

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Lewis from page 2

was on the way to a photo shoot for *Esquire*. What's happening? Unless you've been living in a coal mine for the last two months, you know that Al Lewis is running for Governor as the Green Party candidate. The Greens, best known for running Ralph Nader for President, probably don't have a chance, and deciding to put Lewis on the ticket was initially perceived as an attention-grabbing stunt by some. But Craig Seeman, New York State Campaign Manager, sees Lewis as a legitimate candidate, "a grassroots activist who shares our politics and goals." And Lewis doesn't have to win to help the Greens (as they call themselves) in a big way. If Lewis gets 50,000 votes, and Seeman is convinced he will, the Green Party will have a ballot line and be on voter registration cards for several future elections, "and that will make it easier for activists all around the state to run in local races." As if that statement isn't strong enough, Seeman goes on to say that "if you vote for the losing major party candidate in New York State, (probably the Democrats this year) it will be a wasted vote; if you vote for Al Lewis, you will create a new political party in New York that will be a victory for all activists."

Several months ago, Seeman began to listen to Lewis on WBAI and discovered that many of his positions were identical to the Green platform. After hearing Lewis say, on air, that taking action was more important than complaining, Seeman contacted Lewis, who after some discussion, agreed to be nominated at the August convention. For now, the radio show that started it all can continue, but FCC regulations will require him to give it up once he is an official candidate.

Lewis is fond of a Molly Ivins quote about "dancing with the one what brung ya." But he says, "I'm a political person but I'm not a politician... Nobody brung me. I paid my own way to the dance."

Lewis's initiation to social activism came early. The son of a Russian-born Jewish mother who was the first of her family to come to the U.S., Lewis grew up respecting learning and hating oppression. A circus performer at 13, Lewis eventually earned a Ph.D.

in Child Psychology because "it was a challenge and I thought I could contribute." Challenging and contributing, two themes that have resonated throughout his life. But, disliking "the paperwork," he left psychology after two years. As a busy full-time actor, he worked in radio, movies, and of course in television, first in Hollywood in *Car 54, Where Are You?* and then moved to New York for the *Munsters* role that changed his life and made him recognizable all over the world.

But Lewis was always an activist, and when he had a chance to work at WBAI, he jumped at the chance to have a forum for voicing his irreverent and outspoken opinions. WBAI Program Director Samori Marksman sees him as an inspiration to listeners, not just because he is "a fountain of youth" but because "he is not afraid to say what he believes." And he regularly urges his listeners to action. Taking a page from Mayor LaGuardia, who read the comics to the children of New York, Lewis regularly reads from some of the 60 American and foreign newspapers and magazines to which he subscribes.

On a recent program, he was most passionate about a book suggesting that the Nazis were tolerated because they committed their atrocities in a series of steps and that "if Jews had been gassed in '33 instead of '43, people would have been horrified and done something." Lewis asserts that the process of "gradualism" "is happening in the U.S. today and power-grabbing gradualists are taking over more and more of American life. To Lewis, "going along just to get along" is "being a 'good German.'"

Asked his definition of a happy life, Lewis says, "The secret is to find something you love to do, and then spend your life doing it." When will her 88-year-old husband retire? Karen Ingenthron-Lewis says adamantly "my husband is never going to retire!" Lewis backs her up by saying, "What would I retire to - the rocking chair?"

What is important to Lewis, he makes clear, is "the struggle - the advancement of people." And he makes it even clearer that, for him, the struggle will not soon end.

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Our philosophy: *Our office offers adults and children a Quality Dental Service with gentleness, compassion, thoroughness, and respect for their time at a moderate dental cost. Services include Bonding, Veneers, ZOOM! In-Office Bleaching, Implants.*

Met Life in-network participant
Delta Dental in-network participant

Some of the Dental Plans we accept toward payment:
21st Century, Cigna, Aetna, Prudential, USHealthCare, Guardian, First Fortis, etc.



Daytime Hours: Mon., Fri. 9-6; Tue., Wed. 12-5; Thur. 3-7
Evening Hours: Tue., Wed. 6-9

Lawrence Itskowitch, DDS, PC

Treating residents 24 years

501 Main Street • 212-752-8722

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Katherine Teets Grimm, M.D.

Board Certified Pediatrician

501 Main Street • Roosevelt Island • 212-753-5505

Have a happy, healthy school year!

Office Hours

Monday & Thursday • 9 a.m. -12 noon
Tuesday • 12:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday & Friday • 1:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Coverage provided at all times, when office is closed, by Dr. Grimm or by her group, Uptown Pediatrics.

We provide comprehensive health care to children and adolescents. Dr. Grimm is also qualified to evaluate and treat allergy and asthma in adults.