West 104th Street

BLOCK ASSOCIATION December 7, 2001 **NEWSLETTER**

Editor: Nancy Lian Layout and Design: John Johnston

Holiday Sing on December 19

Sing your holiday heart out on Wednesday, December 19! Come all ye carolers to the lobby of 905 West End at 7:00. We'll do a little vocal warm-up and then take our jingle bells and voices out on to the street. We'll finish up around 7:45 singing for our neighbors in the grand, marble-lined lobby that is 895 West End Ave; the building has invited the carolers to join in their annual holiday party. Think of the glorious sound you'll produce in that space!

More Yard Sale *Thank You's*

We had wonderful, sweet sounds coming from the Yard Sale stage on October 7. Botafogo, a Brazilian quartet headed by flutist Suzy Schwartz, made it a 'three-peat' performance, having played at our previous two Yard Sales. In the late afternoon, Lenny Pogin, our neighbor in 895 West End, played jazz guitar.

The morning following the party, Zeke and Arturo, who work in 905 West End, and Joseph, 895 West End's super, bagged the loose debris left over from the Yard Sale.

Murder Ink/Ivy's Books (2488 Broadway) and Labyrinth Books (536 W. 112th St.) bought many of our leftover books.

Report on Rosenberg Exhibit Tour

Kathleen Hulser, our neighbor and the curator of *The Rosenbergs Reconsidered: The Death Penalty in the Cold War Era*, led a block association-sponsored tour of the exhibit at the New-York Historical Society on November 17. The tour was as interesting for the materials Kathleen displayed on the walls as it was for the knowledge and Cold War experiences Kathleen solicited from her audience. For instance, Lew Taishoff of 905 West End spoke authoritatively about the Venona code used by Russian agents operating in North America. Muriel Mannings of 309 W 104 talked about the environment of fear that characterized the post-war period. She told the group that she was among those protesting the Rosenbergs' death sentences in front of the White House the very day they were executed in June 1953.

Kathleen has promised to lead a tour for us of her next show at the Historical Society. You won't want to miss it!

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Calendar of Selected Events

12/8-9 **Menorah Magic!** Celebrate Hanukkah lights, design candles. Make books in the KLUTZ Book factory, continues on 12/12, 12/13 and 12/14 at 2, 3 and 4 pm. Children's Museum of New York, 212 W. 83rd St., Call 212-721-1234.

12/9 **Hanukkah Celebration,** crafts at 1:30 to 2:30 pm to make dreidels, kiddush cups, 3:00 to 4:00 pm, Judas Maccabaeus by Handel. Crafts $5 per person, concert $25. YMHA, Lex. at 92nd St. Call 212-415-5500 for more information.

12/9 **Riverside Christmas Pageant,** Riverside Church Nave, 10:45 am, Free.

12/9 **Lighting of the World's Largest Menorah,** 5th Avenue ata 59th St. 5:30 pm. Repeats daily at different times. Singing and dancing also. Call 212-736-8400 for more information.

12/9 **Messiah, by Handel,** St. Michael's Church, 99th and Amsterdam, 7:30 pm. St. Michael's Choir and Soloists, Nicholas White, Director. $25, Students and seniors $10.

12/10 **Rockin' and Lullin' with Jody Prusan,** Program with sing-along, play-along, music and movement. Morningside Heights YPL, 2900 Bwy at 113th, 10:30 am.Children 3 to 6.

12/11 **Make Your Own Christmas Ornament,** Christmas at the American Bible Society,. 1865 Broadway at 61st St., 3 to 5 pm. For Children 5-12. Space limited to 40. Please call 212-408-1586 to register. Program repeats on 12/13.

12/12 **Hansel and Gretel.** A puppet show with Czech-style marionettes, featuring Ellen van Wees. Recommended for ages 3 to 7. Sponsored by CLASP. Bloomingdale Branch, NYPL, 150 W 100th St., 4 pm.

12/13 **Wild Strawberries,** film directed by Ingmar Bergman, Bloomingdale Branch NYPL, 150 W 100th St., 6 pm.

12/13 **Keepers of the Flame, Highlights in Jazz**, presented by Jack Kleinsinger. Pace Downtown Theater, 3 Spruce Street, 8 pm. Tickets $22.50, students $20.00. Call 212-346-1715.

12/15 **1000 Paper Cranes,** family workshop at Cathedral of St. John, 1047 Amst at 112. Tickets $5. Call 212-932-7347.

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12/16 **Candlelight Carol Festival,** Riverside Church, with prelude on the Rockefeller Memorial Carillon at 3 and 5:30 pm. Tickets $15, seniors & students $10. Call 212-870-6784. f.

12/16 **Prokofiev Marathon,** complete piano sonatas of Prokofiev hosted by Joseph Horowitz with Valery Gergiev. St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia. 7:30 to 11 pm. Tickets $20. Call 212-854-7799 for specific information.

12/17 **Sergei Rachmaninoff Vespers,** Russian Chamber Chorus of New York, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, 154 W 57 St., 8 pm. Tickets $25. Call 212-239-4699.

12/18 **Crafts for ages 3 to 6.** Bloomingdale Branch, NYPL, 150 W 100th St., 4 pm. Call 212-222-8030 for more information.

12/20 **Pinky,** film directed by Elia Kazan, Bloomingdale Branch NYPL, 2 pm.

12/25 **Circle the World** in art, music, magic, stories, films and crafts. Jewish Museum at 1109 Fifth Ave. & 92nd St. Free with museum admission of $8 adults, $5.50 sstudents and seniors, children under 12 free. Call 212-423-3200 .

12/26 **Celebrate Kwanzaa: The Seventh Principle,** spirited African music and dance performance. Children's Museum of New York. 1:30 and 3 pm. Continues 12/27, 12/28, 12/29 and 12/30. Call 212-721-1234 for more information.

12/26 **Picture Book Hour,** Bloomingdale Branch NYPL, 150 W 100th St., 4 pm. For ages 3 to 6.

12/27 **A Streetcar Named Desire,** film directed by Elia Kazan, Bloomingdale NYPL, 150 W 100th St., 1 pm.

12/28 **Story Hour with Christina Kover,** Bloomingdale NYPL. 150 W 100th St., 4 pm. For ages 6 and older.

12/31 **New Year's Even Asics/Runner's World Midnight Run,** dashing through Central Park. Costumes, dancing and fireworks. Contact New York Road Runners at 212-860-4455.

1/1 **Adventure on a Shoestring.** Explore the Times Square area at 3 pm. Tickets $5. Call 212-265-2663 for more information.

1/10 **The Art of Playing Standards, Highlights in Jazz**, Pace Downtown Theater, 3 Spruce Street, 8 pm. Tickets $22.50, students $20.00. Call 212-346-1715 for more information.

1/12 **Children's Concert Series,** Brook Hedick and George Wurzbach providing a winter vacation through the world songs and stories, piano and guitar. Riv. Church Assembly Hall, 11 am. Tickets $5 adult, $2 children. Call 212-870-6722. .

West 104th Street Block Association Board

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E-mail: West104block@hotmail.com

November 2001 Treasurer's Report *by Sid Herzfeld*

OPENING BALANCE 11/01/01		**$11,161.46**
INCOME		
Dues	$ 925.00	
Yard Sale IV		
Books	575.00	
Misc.	95.00	
Bank Interest	11.02	
TOTAL INCOME	**$1,606.02**	**$ 1,606.02**
EXPENSES		
Guard Service	4,251.02	
Newsletter	225.00	
NY Times 9/11 Fund	2,200.00	
Yard Sale IV		
Tips to Supts.	100.00	
Volunteer Party	20.35	
Bank Fee	15.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$6,811.37**	**< 6,811.37>**
CLOSING BALANCE 11/30/01		**$ 5,956.11**

Urgent need for 4th quarter dues

November's financial report (above) shows that the block association is dangerously close to running out of funds at the end of the year. After we pay for December guard service, we'll have $1,705 in our bank account. If you haven't paid your fourth quarter dues, please do so today.

Letters to the Editor

In the last newsletter, one name was omitted from the list acknowledging people who contributed to the success of the Yale Sale. Teresa Elwert coordinated the entire event. She energetically and ubiquitously watched over it on that freezing Sunday and saw to every loose end when it was over. And then some: three weeks later she was trundling unsold books to the Bloomingdale branch library. We are fortunate to have Teresa with us—especially after September 11 how true that is. She has again wowed us with her formidable abilities to organize and inspire; to promote us to volunteer time, labor and skills; and to allow us to appireciate how satisfying it can be to act together as a community.

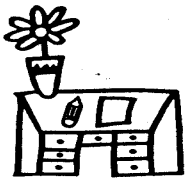
Nathan Gross, 320 Riverside

An additional contribution of dues to thank you and the block association for making our lives here so much more pleasant and secure. Thank you for your work.

Carole Slade

In my dark, dark house...
There are blue and red rooms
And the moon

By Clea, at age 3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Memorial Flower Bulb Planting

The block association's Spring 2002 flower bulb planting is dedicated to the memory of the emergency rescue workers, police officers, and firefighters who died in the World Trade Center attack on September 11. Block residents Dru Heidle, Susan and Justin Baldwin, Lani Sanjek, Teresa Elwert, and Josh Eisen planted a variety of pink, yellow, apricot, red, and white tulips and daffodils in our 23 tree gardens. Next spring, as we enjoy the dazzling floral display, we'll remember the extraordinarily brave men and women who selflessly gave of their lives that horrible day.

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New York City: The Last 17,000 Years

By Ned Barnard

In a fall so warm that leaves are lingering on the trees into December, it is hard to imagine what the metropolitan region was like about 17,000 years ago. A melting sheet of ice almost a thousand feet thick covered what is now the Upper West Side. It was part of a glacier stretching across eastern North America all the way from the Canadian Arctic to Staten Island. As the ice melted away only lichens and mosses grew on the stony wasteland that was later to become New York City. Gradually pioneering grasses and the first trees, jack pine and birches, created an open subarctic parkland dotted with pothole lakes and ponds. As frigid winds blowing from melting icefields to the north diminished, balsam fur and spruces moved in along with a host of animals including woolly mammoths, mastodons, caribou, and sabertooth tigers. Trailing them were small bands of hunters who used flint spear points.

About nine thousand years ago, the largest beasts and their nomadic hunters had vanished due, perhaps, to a steadily warming climate and over hunting. The boreal balsam fir and spruces had receded northward and were replaced by forests of oak, beech, chestnut, tuliptree, hickories, maples, and hemlock.

Six thousand years ago a new group of human inhabitants were living in the forests of the New York City area. Hunters and fishermen, the Lenape, or "real men" as they called themselves, ate venison, wild turkey, fish, clams, oysters, nuts, and berries. Twenty-five hundred years ago, the Lenape were also cultivating squash, and by a thousand years ago, they were planting beans, corn, cucumbers, and tobacco.

The Lenape did not live in the same place year round. They moved from one campsite to another as the seasons progressed. Their needs for firewood and space for farmland and their habit of burning the stubble off their fields before annual plantings produced large, grassy open areas. They also burned underbrush in the forests to make game hunting easier, creating parklike stretches of widely spaced older trees with bark thick enough to withstand brush fires.

When European settlers arrived in the New York City area in the early seventeenth century, they drastically altered the Lenape's fire-sculptured landscape. Between 1626 and 1776, the colonists cleared most of Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn and large portions of Queens and Staten Island. They cut down the forests to meet a growing demand for lumber and firewood and to make way for crops, pastures, streets, and buildings. During the Revolution British and Hessian soldiers felled most of the remaining large trees to feed campfires and build huts.

In the first half of the 19th century, much of the forested landscape surrounding the city was transformed into farmland. Millions of trees were cut in the Hudson River Valley to produce firewood to heat homes, to power steamboats, and to make charcoal used in iron furnaces and in kilns that baked bricks for thousands of tenements constructed in the Lower East Side, Harlem, and the outer boroughs.

As city forests dwindled, land owners began planting non-native trees such as Norway maple, white poplars, and London plane. By the mid-19th century the notion of establishing landscaped open spaces became popular. People crowded Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, eager to stroll on its tree-shaded paths away from dusty streets and the stifling heat of their apartments. Central Park, Prospect Park, and Riverside Park were the fruits of a broad movement to develope public green spaces. Between 1850 and 1900 city-owned parklands expanded from 200 acres to over 5,000.

In the 20th century the New York City Parks Department, or City of New York Parks and Recreation as it is now called, continued to acquire park lands and took over the maintenance of curbside trees planted by property owners throughout the city. Funding for maintenance was inadequate, however, and many parks exhibited serious signs of neglect. Recently Parks and Recreation has placed new emphasis on managing and restoring wild woodlands in city parks, on replanting street and park trees, and on rebuilding park recreational facilities. Parks and Recreation works with several non- profit, private organizations such as the Central Park Conservancy and the New York Tree Trust to manage parks and to secure supplemental funding through public and corporate donations.

At the beginning of 21st century New York City is the most densely populated urban area in the country renowned for its concrete canyons, yet it contains a 26,000-acre network of green spaces including world-class botanical gardens, landscaped parks with thousands of native and exotic trees, 6,000 acres of wild forests in sites ranging from 30 to 1,000 acres, and hundreds of miles of trees growing along streets. In addition, the city is surrounded by dozens of forested state parks, national wildlife refuges, and preserves. In a time of budget slashing and cutbacks, our splendid parks and preserves are likely to suffer from neglect as they have in the past. Don't forget to support them with money and volunteer time you can spare.

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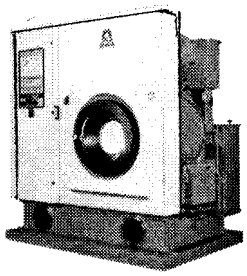

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Unhooking

By Estelle Kattelson

In the "old days," when we saw people huddled in the lee of buildings against the wind, we might have assumed they were either lighting a cigarette or a crack vial; more often now, they're plugged into whoever is out there in the ether, carrying on intense conversations. I'm talking about cell phone users. Those ubiquitous little gadgets—more in use now than ever before—are quite democratic; they cross all cultural boundaries, include all age groups.

Recently, coming home from a pleasant lunch at Ollie's on 116th St, my eye was caught by a rapid movement in the window of *Lord of the Fleas,* a small dress shop to my right. A tall, slender young woman, in the process of dressing a mannequin, had lost her balance; she was carrying on a conversation on the cell phone tucked into her right shoulder and at the same time, trying not to drop the bare arm of the figure. I stood, amused, watching the hilarious attempts of the window dresser to maintain her balance, while playing hot potato with the arm. Observing me observing her antics, she smiled sheepishly, but continued her chat. I walked on, shaking my head in amazement.

Seen on West End Avenue: A young mother wheeling her toddler's stroller with one hand, the other raised to her ear, schmoozing; ditto the toddler, animatedly engaged in "conversation" on her very own play cell phone!

These days, I'm hyper-vigilant, foolishly ready to jump in and rescue anyone crossing a street with an apparent disregard for lights; do they assume drivers will respect1 the importance of their phone call? *[Like, Hey, man! Can't you see I 'm on the phone?]* But as we all know, New Yorkers must have a crust of *chutzpa,* in order to survive.

In the Department of This is Going Too Far: I'm in a booth in the women's rest room of a small movie theater. I hear a woman speaking as though to someone she might have come in with. However, I hear no response. The woman in the adjoining booth is not crazy; she's on her cell phone, having a very relaxed chat. It's as though she had thought, since she had a couple of minutes with nothing to do, she might as well make use of that time. Now that's quite admirable! Perhaps she's an efficiency expert.

I am assailed by the constant sight of raised elbows with the small dark object at the ear, the sometimes vacant look; people waiting at bus shelters, aimlessly chattering; people walking their dogs or wheeling their children in the park; weekend dads walking their children down to their soccer games, chatting on the phone; people in buses and trains — on the phone! Have you ever heard three people on a bus speaking at the same time, in three different languages? I have. Then there are teens and pre-teens with their phones —don't ask!

Conversations that *used to* be held in the privacy of one's home or office are now broadcast in every public venue, without embarrassment. I see this as a troubling phenomenon. I don't discount the importance of people having to confirm or change appointments on the fly, or of children and parents having to reach one another, or other similar important needs. But this proliferation of users, everywhere one turns, is a bit over the top! And has become more so, since the terrible events of September 11.

I believe what's been happening for some time is that people have become afraid to be alone in themselves, to allow themselves a certain quietude in order to reflect on how they're dealing with events elsewhere in the world, or in their own lives, it's as though they fear they can't survive, unhooked from that small black umbilicus.

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