

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2018

VOL.48, NO. 4

Kick off the Holidays on a High Note

IT'S HIGH TIME to send these oppressively short days packing and start celebrating the lengthening of the light. Come join us for Solstice Caroling on Thurs., Dec. 20. We'll stroll around the neighborhood, bringing favorite holiday tunes, good cheer, and a blessing for peace to each block. We're always glad to see a big crowd of familiar faces, and happily welcome enthusiastic newcomers who join our festive mob. As always, we'll convene in the lobby of 865 West End Ave. at 7 p.m. Greetings will be exchanged, song sheets distributed, headlamps turned on, sleigh bells jingled, and, led by the very able and amenable Anthony Bellov and Dayle Vander Sande, off we'll go on a circuit throughout the neighborhood. After we've brought our joyful noise to each block, we'll repair indoors for warm cider, light refreshments, and an abundance of conviviality, thanks to the hospitality of the Master Apartments. You'll find the song sheets in the Calendar of Events section of our website (w102-103blockassn.org). An illuminated screen and the ability to zoom in are advantages to accessing the digital version. If you're a caroling regular, we're looking forward to seeing you. If you're a newbie, come join us! For information, write caroling@w102-103blockassn.org.

Digging the Bulbs and Strewing the Mulch

By MARK SCHNEIDERMAN

ALTHOUGH OCTOBER'S TREE-WELL CLEANUP DAY started out overcast, the sun came out as the hours progressed. As always, our neighbors from St. Luke's were very helpful. Board members Bob Aronson, Terence Hanrahan, Celia Knight, Cynthia Doty, and other neighbors joined in. Overall, we planted 180 tulip and daffodil bulbs and we mulched 15 tree wells.

A somewhat modest turnout caused me to reflect on the point of these events. While we could pay someone to care for all of the tree wells, my view is that neighborhood participation is the point of the Block Association. I hope that folks who come and plant share in the pride of a job well done. Our neighbors see colorful and varied plantings, appreciating the care that all of us take in the appearance of our block.

This year we had gloomy weather, which always affects turnout and is a factor the Block Association can't control. If you have feedback on how to better publicize our fall or spring tree-well events or otherwise encourage turnout, please email trees@w102-103blockassn.org. We look forward to seeing everyone in the spring!



Lend a Hand to Those in Need

FOR THE 17TH YEAR IN A ROW, thanks to the dedication of one of our board members, the Block Association will

join with the U.S. Department of Justice's New York office in an effort to provide holiday toys and gifts for victims of domestic violence who live at the Henry Street Settlement

shelter. Hundreds of toys, books, and small gifts, both new and gently used, are donated, collected, wrapped, and delivered through this annual project. To make a donation, please mark your package for Camille and drop it off at the lobby desk of 305 Riverside Dr. Or call (646) 345-5209 to arrange for items to be picked up. And don't think solely in terms of the December holidays. This is an initiative that keeps on giving all year. Donated household goods and clothing, books, toys, etc., are collected and distributed to shelter residents and others in need year-round. Feel free to drop items off with the doorman whenever it's convenient.

The West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association Newsletter

info@w102-103blockassn.org
Hedy Campbell, editor; Brad Spear, designer. Comments and questions related to the Association or Newsletter are welcomed. Address letters to Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 1940, New York, NY 10025. Email may be sent to *editor@w102-103blockassn.org*. Phone messages may be left at 212-865-8524. Previous issues of the Newsletter are available online at *w102-103blockassn.org*.

EMAIL LIST

The Block Association maintains an email list to notify residents about important matters that arise between issues of the Newsletter. You can join the list by sending your email address, full name, home address (with apartment number), and phone number to *email@w102-103blockassn.org*.

GUARD SCHEDULE

Our security guard makes rounds Monday through Thursday from 6 p.m. until midnight, and on Friday and Saturday from 7 p.m. until 1 a.m. To report neighborhood security issues to the guard or to request his assistance, call him at (646) 722-2240, or call the office of Starr Security at (212) 767-1110.

HELP WANTED

THE BLOCK ASSOCIATION is seeking new board members! Our immediate need is for people who are willing to make an ongoing commitment to the Block Association. The best way to keep the organization fresh and moving forward is to welcome new ideas, new leadership, and new energy. Plus, many of our board members have served for decades! Although they agree that it's a satisfying role, they're ready to kick back and/or redirect their energies. Our monthly meetings (second Tuesday of each month, at 8 p.m., 306 W. 102nd St.) are quick and to the point and seldom last more than 90 minutes. Our camaraderie is robust. There are usually cookies. There aren't many circumstances in which you get to share your ideas, have a laugh, and make an impact on your neighborhood without taking more than a few steps from your own front door. Join us by coming to a monthly meeting or email *info@w102-103blockassn.org*.

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BLOCK ASSOCIATION UPCOMING EVENTS

Solstice Caroling
Thurs., Dec. 20, 7 p.m.

Spring Newsletter
Early March

Annual Meeting
Thurs., Mar. 21 (tentative)

Spring Planting
TBD

Yard Sale
Sat., May 18 (tentative)

BLOCK ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Regular Block Association meetings are held monthly, usually on the second Tuesday of every month at 8 p.m. 306 W. 102nd St.

Dec. 11

Jan. 8

Feb. 12

Shovel off to Buffalo

AREN'T WE LUCKY that we don't get as much snow as they do? Perhaps because we don't get big snowfalls regularly, it's easy to forget what the city requires from building owners when it comes to clearing snow from the sidewalks. Here's what the Dept. of Sanitation website says: "Every owner, lessee, tenant, occupant, or other person having charge of any lot or building must clean snow and/or ice from the sidewalk within four hours after the snow has stopped falling, or by 11:00

a.m. if the snow has stopped falling after 9:00 p.m. the previous evening."

The people who manage the larger buildings in the neighborhood seem to do a pretty good job of staying on top of snow removal. If you're the owner or landlord of one of the smaller buildings, please do your part and keep the sidewalks clear. Residents, try not to get huffy if the snow is still coming down and a sidewalk isn't clear. Of course

anyone who's inclined can certainly pick up a shovel and help out by clearing the storm drains and helping create paths at the corners. Anyone trying to cross a street in the neighborhood, especially those with strollers, walkers, or wheelchairs or who have impaired balance, will be eternally grateful. Well, maybe only grateful until the next snowfall.

Halloween 2018... Have Great Weather and They will Come!

By JANE HOPKINS

HALLOWEEN IS A BIG DEAL IN HOUR FAIR CITY. And there's a lot of competition for where to go and what to do that night, including the very famous Greenwich Village parade! Plus many kids live in or near large apartment buildings and can simply go in costume from floor to floor and door to door to fill their bags with candy. Others walk in and out of stores on Broadway for plenty of sweets and treats.

But despite lots of choices on how to spend the evening, parents and kids living in the neighborhood came to our event in great numbers this year! Estimates are that about 400 people attended, roughly double the usual crowd. Of course, we had done our homework to publicize the event. And the weather was a big help: October 31 was a mild afternoon and evening, and it was a pleasure to be out and about. Those who joined our parade and party had an opportunity to meet up with friends and neighbors and have fun, whether in costume or not.

Our festivities take place largely on W. 102nd St. between West End Ave. and Riverside Dr. Residents of this particular block are big Halloween enthusiasts, with life-size, appropriately scary mannequins placed at their front doors much like what you'd see on a movie set! This year there was something new: A van with a large inflated Halloween pumpkin and black cat was parked right across the street from our refreshment tables. What a terrific and unexpected surprise this was!

The parade officially started at 6 p.m. Terence Hanrahan, who provided valuable support the entire evening, lifted his megaphone and summoned celebrants to the corner of W. 102nd St. and West End Ave. Bill and Dolores Weeden, who reprised their roles as King and Queen of the parade, joined Terence and led parents and children one block north on West End Ave. to W. 103rd St. Here they made a left turn and proceeded down toward the river, passing many

decorated homes that offered treats. At Riverside Dr., all turned left and marveled at an artistic display of Halloween masks designed and mounted along the drive by Barbara Morgan. A final left turn brought everyone back to W. 102nd St. The crowd then easily found its way to our refreshment tables, where several volunteers were stationed to distribute homemade sweets, candy, fresh fruit, and healthy beverages. The volunteers included Cynthia Doty, Bob Flanagan, Laura Hanrahan, Celia Knight, and Komal Rathi, who also solicited donations for the Block Association. Ozzie Alfonso took photos of the event for our Block Association website.

Our advance team this year included Bob Aaronson, who placed posters along the parade route to inform neighbors of the street closure; and David Reich, who parked his car strategically on W. 102nd St. ahead of time, so as to leave us a prime spot for our refreshment tables when the festivities began.

We couldn't offer our Halloween Parade each year without the support of the St. Luke's staff and residents, under the direction of Ray Dooley—as well as Tina Gonzalez, our point person for the event. On Halloween Day, as we geared up for the event, the St. Luke's folks set up traffic barriers at the corner of W. 102nd St. and Riverside Dr. to prevent through traffic. And they remained at this location during the entire time to ensure safety. They also helped us hang our Block Association banner and set up our refreshment tables, and contributed dozens of cupcakes decorated with colorful icing. Did I mention cleanup? They were with us for that, too. We couldn't execute an event of this size without their help and the help provided by our other wonderful volunteers.

Once the tables were in place, my team and I quickly decorated them with string lights and Halloween-themed tablecloths, napkins, paper plates, and cups (thanks to Camille Colon for her donation that covered paper goods and

bottled beverages). Tables were quickly covered with cupcakes baked by the St. Luke's crew, homemade brownies contributed by Hedy Campbell, fresh apples from Sue Maderer, and a vanilla-and-chocolate cake by Jill Chase. We also found space for several large bowls of candy donated by friends and neighbors. Sax Freymann carved a scary pumpkin, which was placed front and center on one of our tables. We are so appreciative that he contributes this creative art piece to our event each year. After the party is over, we donate it to St. Luke's for their enjoyment and as a way to say thanks for all their help that evening.

We're not just about sweets and treats at our event. Hedy Campbell volunteered to read stories to children who gathered around. She was perfectly situated beneath a street light that provided just the right amount of illumination for the task at hand.

Best wishes and thanks to all who contributed to make our celebration of Halloween a wonderful time together.

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By JULIA C. SPRING

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BETSY GOLDBERG

Betsy's solo show, *Intersections*, with many scenes from our neighborhood in her paintings, is in the Master Gallery, the lobby of 310 Riverside at W. 103rd St., until **Sat., Jan. 26**. The building is open 24 hours a day; maybe you noticed her paintings when you voted, so go back and look again.

OZZIE ALFONSO AND BAIP PHOTO GROUP

One of the earliest activity groups of Bloomingdale Aging in Place was the photography one led by Ozzie. You can find "galleries" of members' photographs on specific themes at the BAiP website. The newest addition to that rich online collection is *City Lights*, which went up in **November** and should be an antidote to winter. bloominplace.org/photography.html

SERENA CANIN AND MARK STEINBERG

The Brentano String Quartet, Mark and Serena, violinists, will present an evening of music and poetry at the 92nd Street Y on **Sat., Mar. 9, 8 p.m.** The performance will include works by Beethoven and poetry by Wallace

Stevens. Tickets (\$53 and up); further info at 92y.org/event/brentano-string-quartet

BLOOMINGDALE SCHOOL OF MUSIC

BSM, 323 W. 108th St., between Broadway and Riverside, has faculty, student, and other concerts. On **Thurs., Dec. 6, 7 p.m.**, there will be a free recital by adult students. Other free Friday faculty concerts, all at **7 p.m.**: **Feb. 15**, contemporary Broadway songs, part of American Songbook; and **Mar. 15**, music by current women composers on the theme of war and peace. Look month by month: bsmny.org/concerts/december-2018-1

NEW PLAZA CINEMA

Don't forget to keep looking for where New Plaza is showing movies—most recently at Symphony Space. I went to see *The Wife* on Election Day to distract myself. newplazacinema.com

Do you have an upcoming publication, release, concert, exhibition, or other arts event, physical or virtual? Let me know. Send questions or notices for inclusion in the Spring 2019 Newsletter (or beyond) to creative@w102-103blockassn.org. Do it today, before you forget!

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THE DOT CALENDAR OF PARKING REGULATION SUSPENSIONS IS NOW AVAILABLE. YOU CAN FIND IT AT THE BLOCK ASSOCIATION WEBSITE (W102-103BLOCKASSN.ORG) BY CLICKING ON THE RESOURCES TAB.

On Broadway

By KERSTIN HASENPUSCH

NEWLY OPEN

★ Henry's, on the northwest corner of Broadway and W. 105th St., has closed its doors after almost 20 years. However, all may not be lost! Scott Snyder, a partner in Henry's, has opened **Boulevard Seafood** in the same location. If you spend time in New Jersey and the name sounds familiar, there's good reason. The original Boulevard Seafood has resided in Somerville since 2016. The UWS location will be the fourth of Boulevard Restaurant Group's eateries and will be

open for lunch and dinner with a happy hour tucked in between.

★ **Amster Thai** has opened on the west side of Amsterdam Ave. between W. 101st and W. 102nd Sts., just north of Noche Mexicana and just south of Mokja. (Don't you just love that three countries are represented on a single block and we don't think twice about it?) Amster Thai's menu includes all your favorite Thai specialties and is open for lunch and dinner daily, with online ordering, free delivery, and a lunch special.

COMING SOON

★ CVS is opening a new location on the west side of Broadway between W. 109th and W. 110th Sts. in the old Rite Aid location. Renovation seems to have

begun, so perhaps our speculation that the corner would be entirely redeveloped before the new drugstore opened was incorrect!

CLOSED

★ Sadly, **Il Gatto Nero**, on the southeast corner of Broadway and W. 106th St., has closed its doors. A note posted in the window stated that they were simply unable to carry on in this economy.

★ Another surprise was the closing of **Mezzogiorno**, on the west side of Broadway between W. 107th and W. 108th Sts., after only three years. According to the *West Side Rag*, another Italian restaurant, Fumo, will be moving in.

Arco Is Home to Two Siblings from Sardinia

By KATE MCLEOD

ASISTER AND BROTHER COME TO NEW YORK without speaking a word of English. Three years later, bada bing, bada boom: They open the only Sardinian-themed restaurant in Manhattan, Arco, located at 886 Amsterdam Ave., between W. 103rd and W. 104th Sts. That pair, Francesca and Daniele, are the Fioris, who greet you as you enter their small but beautiful space. Arco is the realization of a dream that Daniele had held since his childhood in Sardinia. The forces were with them, along with their talents, heritage, and an angel named Sebastiano Cappitta, who owns a series of restaurants in New York.

The siblings, both in their late thirties, arrived separately. In fact, they had not been together for 15 years. Francesca left their small village in the Nuoro region of Sardinia when she was 14 to attend boarding school. Daniele remained at home.

When I asked what distinguishes Sardinia from other places in Italy, both of them in separate interviews mentioned hospitality. “Simplicity to make the dish,” said Francesca. “Every meal is a social celebration. And we eat with family, lunch and dinner. My husband is from Chicago and one of seven children. I think they only sit down to eat together at Thanksgiving and Christmas. We share food every day with family. Meals are always accompanied by our deep sense to make people feel welcome.”

The tourist season in Sardinia lasts only about four months, which makes the island’s other income source, farming, an important economic factor.

If you like eating local, plan a trip to Sardinia. There are five regions on the island that have different cuisines, and even within the regions, towns and villages have different recipes. Cured meats are a big tradition in Sardinia; they are served every meal.

“The whole land is covered with herbs. We graze cattle and goats and produce well-known wines and unusual

cheeses,” says Francesca. (The infamous maggot cheese is produced in Sardinia.) “The red grape that grows in Sardinia helps people live for more than 100 years. On the coast the meals are made up of a lot of fish. Our people live inland, a 30-minute ride from the sea, and eat meat—lots of sausage and lamb.”

Sometime after Francesca came to New York, Daniele followed to experience a bigger world. “Before I came to New York I had a regular job. It was a job, not a passion. I used to spend all my free time cooking with friends. When I came to New York I worked as a busboy. I didn’t know any English so I could not even be a waiter. But I went to school to learn English. After three or four months I got good enough so that I became a waiter. Then I attended bartender school and became an assistant manager. Mr. Cappitta found the location on 103rd and Amsterdam and asked me and my sister to open this restaurant. This was a big dream for me; it took a second for me to say yes. So within three years of my coming to New York, it happened.”

When you go to Arco, either Francesca or Daniele is there to greet you. And they bring Sardinia to the table because, despite their wanderlust, the island is in their spirit. “Arco has a face,” says Francesca, “and it is me and Daniele.”

MALLOREDDOS ALLA CRUDAIOLA (Serves 4)

- 14 oz. fresh or dried malloreddos pasta (or any pasta of your choice)
- 3T extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling on top
- 2 red bell peppers
- 1 large yellow onion
- 1 small eggplant

- 2 medium-size zucchini
- Salt
- Black pepper
- Parmigiano Reggiano or Pecorino cheese grated (optional)

1. Put a large pot of water on to boil. Add salt (more than you think, so it tastes like the sea).
2. Meanwhile, cut the vegetables all the same size (about half an inch long).
3. Heat the olive oil in a large sauté pan.
4. Once the oil is hot, add the pasta to the boiling water and cook until al dente.
5. As soon as you put the pasta in, start adding the vegetables to the sauté pan in the following order, every two minutes or until each is softened: red peppers, onion, eggplant, zucchini. Season the vegetables with salt and black pepper.
6. When the zucchini is just wilting, add the pasta to the sauté pan with a little of the pasta water, if too dry. Allow the flavors to mingle.
7. Serve hot, drizzled with additional olive oil and grated cheese, if desired.

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News from Tri-Bloomingdale

A NEW READING GROUP FOR SCI-FI FANS!

TRI-BLOOMINGDALE IS OUR INITIATIVE TOGETHER WITH BAiP and the W.104th St. Block Association to offer neighbors chances to connect. We're delighted to announce a new offering: a Sci-Fi Reading Group, led by Jandy Warner. In this new group, members will share their love of classics such as Robert A. Heinlein's *Double Star* as well as newer titles, like Terry Pratchett's *Making Money* and John Scalzi's *Redshirts*. Jandy is a fan who has enjoyed the genre for more than 50 years and isn't fussy about the dividing line between sci fi and fantasy. She's looking forward to finding others in our neighborhood who feel the same way. The group will meet in a member's home on the third Thursday of every month at 7 p.m. Contact Caitlin Hawke if you'd like to join: chawke@bloominplace.org.

And don't forget: For brisk walkers, our Tri-Bloomingdale Initiative has a fast Sunday-morning walk for you. Meet up at 8 a.m. with neighbors each week and get your heart pumping by walking at a pace of 3.7 mph. To join, contact bloomingdaletriowalk@icloud.com.

For local sole proprietors, Tri-Bloomingdale also has something for you! Networking in the Neighborhood is our monthly meet-up group for neighbors running their businesses from home. Learn best practices and get advice for building your website, managing your social media, and handling clients and billing. This group ranges from accountants to graphic designers to entrepreneur consultants and more. For information, contact bloomingdaleNITN@gmail.com.

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BAiP Explores Columbia's Narrative Medicine Program

By MARIAN ANDERSON

TWO NEW BAI P ACTIVITIES BUILD ON A PARTNERSHIP BEGUN IN 2016 with the Narrative Medicine master's program at Columbia University. The first is a group that attends Columbia's Narrative Medicine Rounds, a lecture series at the medical center; and the second is a reprise of a six-week workshop, Narrative and Aging: A Journey of Learning through Literature, Poetry, Discussion and Brief Reflective Writing. These two BAI P Narrative Medicine initiatives are among the 80 now offered by our Activities Committee, which is co-chaired by Caitlin Hawke and Phyllis Sperling.

"What is Narrative Medicine?" you might ask. Columbia's program, pioneered by Dr. Rita Charon, teaches physicians and health care professionals how to elicit patient stories. Its underlying philosophy is that patients are not bundles of symptoms to be treated but rather individuals who carry with them an individual narrative influenced by culture, language, and social, psychological, emotional, and financial conditions. Telling their stories puts patients at the center of care, to be clearly heard and to be partners in their care, potentially reducing costs, improving outcomes, and increasing both provider and patient satisfaction.

BAIP'S NARRATIVE MEDICINE ROUNDS LAUNCHES

At 3:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday in September, 18 BAI P neighbors gathered at the W. 96th St. IRT subway station to begin their travel to Narrative Medicine Rounds at the Faculty Club of Columbia University Medical Center. These "rounds" are monthly lectures sponsored by the Narrative Medicine program at Columbia and given by scholars, clinicians, and writers whose work may be seen as a bridge between storytelling and health care. Alongside a room full

of health care providers, the group listened as Dr. Haider Warraich, author of *Modern Death: How Medicine Changed the End of Life*, delivered his talk "The Search for Beauty at the End of Life." The same group returned in October to be swept away by Dr. Nina Kraus's talk "Music and the Brain: How Our Lives in Sound Shape Who We Are." Topics to come include "Attending: Medicine, Mindfulness and Humanity" and "Border Lines: How Journalists Sorted Out Fact vs. Fiction in Issues about Children and Immigration."

These eye-opening sessions at this nearby academic institution serve as fertile ground for older neighbors to exercise their minds and spirits in ways they might not usually see as available to them. Participating on par with physicians, nurses, social workers, medical students, and others in academic disciplines, our group members fully engaged as lifelong learners.

By the end of the academic year, four BAI P groups totaling about 80 people will have attended Narrative Medicine Rounds. This group size is uncommonly large for BAI P but reflects members' deep interest, as older patients, in being better understood by their clinicians.

BAIP NARRATIVE WORKSHOP TO LAUNCH IN EARLY 2019

"Narrative and Aging: A Journey of Learning through Literature, Poetry, Discussion and Brief Reflective Writing," a weekly 90-minute workshop delivered over six weeks in early

2019, is also planned in collaboration with Columbia's Narrative Medicine program, and will be led by two graduate students as their practicum.

Each workshop session will engage participants in close readings, reflective writing, and discussions of literary and cultural prompts related to aging. The first workshop two years ago deepened community members' connections and spawned a much-lauded Deep Listening Group, led by Arlene Metrick. While BAI P anticipates that the early 2019 workshop will boast a long waiting list, it's yet another great reason to become a member!

A board member of BAI P, Marian Anderson is incoming chair of BAI P's Panels Committee and is leading both Narrative Medicine groups. For more about BAI P membership, which is free and open to anyone living west of Central Park between W. 96th and W. 110th streets, see bloomplace.org, or call (212) 842-8831 and leave a message with your name and contact information.

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Grape Collective: The Message in a Bottle

By DAYLE VANDER SANDE

PHILOSOPHER SUSAN SONTAG asserts that art criticism intending to interpret art violates it, stating, “The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art—and, by analogy, our own experience—more, rather than less, real to us . . . to show how [art] is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.” Thus, the “erotic” experience of art—“to see more, to hear more, to feel more,” by transparency “is the highest, most liberating value in art.”

We also know that Sontag liked her wine, as one personal account reports that while running late for a lecture, she “drank wine on and on and on as couriers kept arriving.” She seems not to have been interpreting that particular wine in that liberating moment, but elsewhere she recognizes the connoisseurship of “rare wines,” a pursuit that certainly entails analysis.

Wine is often likened to art for its complexity, its process, its sensuousness, yet however theoretical the debate of wine as art vs. craft, for the enthusiast, it is certain that wine is elevated by edification, and if you fancy the fruits of the bacchanalian, baccate bead, **Grape Collective** is an armchair enologist’s heaven. It is much more than our local wine shop around the corner. It’s a whole new experience in wine buying that seeks to provide “edutainment,” in the words of founder and president Christopher Barnes, who predicates his business creation on the notion that “a good wine becomes better the more you know about it,” and then enables us to move right along to the drinking of it.

Once again Sontag states that form is the key to revealing art: “What is needed is a vocabulary—a descriptive, rather than prescriptive, vocabulary—for forms.” Grape Collective provides the lexicon to explore all forms of wine, from grape to gullet. Its online magazine—an essential part of the Grape Collective experience—offers its own comprehensive articles by wine industry personalities, such as familiar experts Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher, who wrote on wine for

The Wall Street Journal for 13 years, as well as new voices. Grape Collective also publishes books of interviews with winemakers as well as producing video content on its YouTube channel. Collectively the enterprise provides a unique resource for peeling away the skin of the mystery of the beloved beverage, and, indeed, the model of mixing journalism with commerce has earned Grape Collective great success, offering more than 1,200 wines from 105 regions, and reaching more than 25,000 customers, who read more than 2,800 articles, all in the past five years!

The website is organized by varietal, region, importer, style, and price point. The Collective ships to almost anywhere in the country or delivers to your local doorstep. The store itself is a combination shop, library, and production studio, with Grape Collective’s contributors working the counter on a rotating basis.

And as Bloomingdale residents, we are most fortunate to be able to walk in the door. The interior design invites the mouth to water. One wall stocks hand-selected labels from makers and importers the world over, the accompanying photographs connecting the bottled-up bounty to the humans who created it. Printed handouts describe featured wines, and there may even be a sample of the soil in which the grape was grown, to further one’s comprehension of its origins. This is not your down-at-the-heels package store!

In these postmodern times, wine begs a postmodern approach, which invites us to explore beyond the usual

framework of what we know or are told to think. To each her own, they say, and it is evidently true of wine, given the vastness of the world’s variety. According to its website, Grape Collective eschews the absolutes of the 100-point grading system and provides instead a “diverse orchestra of voices, those of people who have taken the time to develop their own unique sensibilities and are skilled in communicating their experiences.”

Sontag concurs that “[t]aste has no system and no proofs. But there is something like a logic of taste: the consistent sensibility which underlies and gives rise to a certain taste. A sensibility is almost, but not quite, ineffable. Any sensibility which can be crammed into the mold of a system, or handled with the rough tools of proof, is no longer a sensibility at all. It has hardened into an idea.”

Still, it’s not that another’s ideas on wine are all wrong, but that your own, based on considered exploration, are right for you. If ignorance is bliss, that *what you don’t know won’t kill you*, then your own cultivated knowledge of your wine is ecstasy: What you do know will *thrill* you.

Grape Collective is at 2669 Broadway (between W. 101st and W. 102nd Sts.); tel. (212) 222-3640; grapecollective.com. Hours: Mon.-Sat., 11:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m.; Sun., 12:00-9:00

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The Changing Streetscape: Goodbye, Henry, Old Chum

By CAITLIN HAWKE

THIS COLUMN IS USUALLY A WRAP-UP OF OLD AND NEW FEATURES that you will find on the Block Association website: w102-103blockassn.org. The site is filled with resources, including a calendar of events, stories of neighbors of long standing, an archive of newsletters, and a blog to update you between newsletter issues. But for this piece, I wanted to point to the latest in a series of blog posts that fall under the category "Empty Storefronts and the Changing Streetscape." The series has chronicled the uptick in long-empty retail spaces, the loss of mom-and-pop enterprises, the darkening of movie houses, and, most recently, the shuttering in October of three dine-in restaurants in quick succession, leaving me to wonder if a new trend is at hand. If you are interested in the whole series, click on the tag "Mom & Pop" in the right-hand margin of the blog page: w102-103blockassn.org/blog. What follows is an adaptation of the restaurant-related part of the series.

Notoriously hard to sustain, eateries represent a key piece of the retail ecosystem. They are as sensitive to increases in rent and labor costs as any other commercial enterprise. It's a New York tradition to eat out, so changes in the local options always catch our attention.

We've been enjoying an influx of new places, but we've also lost quite a few. An unscientific observation tells me that many of the new places are informal or walk-in/takeout spots—the kind of operations that maximize square footage, minimize service staff, and rely on volume business. This was underscored for me in October when these three large, pricey-for-our-area restaurants met their demise: Mezzogiorno, Il Gatto Nero, and Henry's. Each had a slightly different reason for shuttering, and two have already opened under different ownership, or are in the process of doing so. But are

we seeing a new trend in this microclimate of Bloomingdale? Elements contributing to the closures may range from the rent environment to local resistance to high-priced entrées. Turnover in restaurants isn't new in the city, but I am watching and wondering if something new is at play.

Of the three, the one loss that really stings is Henry's. News came only a week or two before the October 21 closure, when owner Henry Rinehart announced in an email his plans to move on from his Frank Lloyd Wright-ian restaurant, which stood at W. 105th St. for 19 years and bore his name. Henry's replaced Birdland, for those of you who remember back to the space's jazzier days. Rinehart's reason was "a change in personal and professional priorities." The business has now passed to Henry's partner, chef Scott Snyder, and his Boulevard Seafood Company, soon to be reviewed in these pages. You may be relieved to learn that the famous kale salad will live another day, since Chef Snyder hasn't nudged it off the menu.

Under Rinehart, Henry's was, to many, a *Cheers*-like bar made famous by an ensemble of wry barflies yearning for a "third place," where they could take a break from their worries at home and at work. It had a hopping bar scene. It was a sports mecca. It was a great brunch spot. It was an outdoor café. It was a neighborhood sing-in club. And it was a hospitable place to land for a holiday or to give a weary home cook the night off. It was a place where, if they didn't know your name, at least they acknowledged you as a regular. Henry's had it all, and was a big player in the community. And if that isn't enough, Henry himself was an advocate for healthier school lunches.

I don't doubt that many felt Henry's had its gentrifying side when it first took root. It was always a bit above other local haunts in terms of cost.

I noticed that prices crept upward recently—perhaps to fend off what became an inevitable battle to reap profit out of such expansive square footage. Alas, Henry's is no more.

I wonder if what I am observing isn't along the lines of the temple-thumping exclamation "It's rent, stupid!"—no different from the problem with the mom-and-pop-store die-off. But the answer may be more complex. Restaurants might be competing with the availability of high-end prepared foods that come from Whole Foods or with the quality specialty ingredients home cooks can now find at Trader Joe's and H Mart, among other food retailers. Restaurants don't yet seem to be victims of e-tailers like Amazon, but is something other than rent pressure weighing on the old-style dine-in spots? Is it that the market only bears up to a certain menu price point around here? Or is it just a matter of time before more Serafinas move in, more large restaurants go vacant, or just more turnover occurs?

Fortunately, City Council members regularly take up the topic of commercial rents, mindful of all the vacancies. Unfortunately, the needle never moves much. It seems early to say, but we might be seeing a little progress with new legislation sponsored and small-business committee hearings held by Ydanis Rodriguez. Councilmember Helen Rosenthal is also a proponent.

Called the Small Business Jobs Survival Act, the new bill aims to define conditions and requirements for commercial-lease renewal negotiations, lease renewal terms, arbitration-triggering conditions, limits on security deposits, and prohibitions on landlord retaliation. I've been writing about the changing streetscape a lot because some days I feel like we're in the 11th hour and 59th minute of what I view as a retail crisis on Broadway. And while restaurants may not be as endangered as mom-and-pop retailers, I truly hope we don't wait until the last minute to solve the economics of Broadway. We can see with our own eyes that the law of supply and demand has been subverted. I believe it can be fixed. But sadly not in time to enable us to keep singing for our supper at Henry's

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