



New Delhi Boy Makes Good

By Marlene Lee

Chander Malik invited me into the cozy back room of his restaurant, Indian Café, at 107th Street and Broadway. He had told me over the telephone he would be happy to answer my questions, "if they're not too hard." Now he offered me a glass of wine. As we began to talk, our elbows resting on the polished blond bar glowing under soft lighting, customers gathered around, all wanting to greet Chander.

"I came to the United States from New Delhi in 1976, by myself, as a young engineering student nineteen years old," he began. He was joining his older brother who already lived in New York City. "I remember that when my brother had returned to New Delhi on visits, he'd changed. Grown up. I liked that. I wanted to grow up like him. And I wanted adventure."

But in New York, Chander was homesick. He missed his friends more than anything else in India. He felt like an outsider. "Here, I didn't understand people's mentality. 'Well,' I said to myself, 'I'll make a deadline of four years. By 1980 if I'm still homesick, I'll go back to India.' My father was of the upper middle class, you see. We had two servants. I was comfortable. Everyone here works so hard. 'What

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The West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association *NEWSLETTER*

Jock Davenport Retires As Newsletter Editor

By Rosalyn Cherry

After nearly a decade of editing our Block Association (BA) newsletter, Jock Davenport has retired with Volume 32 Issue # 1. A professor of history at the College of Staten Island (CUNY), Jock has been a long time resident of 300 RSD where he lives with his wife, Batya Miller.

Under Jock's leadership and vision our newsletters have reflected the issues and community concerns of our Upper West Side neighborhood combined with restaurant reviews and interviews with neighborhood artists, movers and shakers. Jock was responsible for expanding the Crimewatch Column (ably reported by Terence Hanrahan and then Don Perman). Jock also started to include more personal news about members of the Board of Directors and other BA neighbors - births, marriages and deaths. Jock's sense of humor has been reflected in such issues as the endangered telephone booth.

Overall Jock has proven to be a superior editor, writer and historian. He has taken BA issues that affect our individual lives and tied them into our quality of life on the Upper West Side. Through the power of the pen, Jock has been an activist for the community not only presenting the issues but leading the way to action where situations actually can and

do change.

A recent example of Jock's community leadership is the closing of CVS at W. 102nd Street and Broadway. The issue here is the trend of major chains taking over in our neighborhoods and squeezing out the "mom and pop" stores such as Suba Pharmacy at W. 104th and Broadway which is still here. This is not so for the Samba Deli on Broadway between 105th and 106th Streets which will be replaced by Kentucky Fried Chicken.

Whatever the subject, from a broken fence on RSD to double parking to the Asian Longhorn Beetle threat to the history of Straus Park and our Bloomingdale neighborhood, Jock has provided us over the years with a full range of issues. With this information (much of which would not be reported any-

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BLOCK ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Regular Block Association meetings are held twelve times a year on the second Tuesday of every month.

TIME: 8:00 p.m.
PLACE: 306 W. 102nd St.

The next two meetings will be held on July 9 and August 13.

Jock Davenport Retires as Editor

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where else) we become more knowledgeable neighbors, West Siders and New Yorkers.

Jock's famous restaurant reviews have been posted up and down Broadway. You may remember his reviews at Gandhijee, Ming's Court, Mama Mexico, Royal Kabab and Curry and the Silver Moon Bakery. Jock's witty and descriptive reviews were such that you wanted to go there immediately for lunch or dinner.

Jock's interviews of West Side neighbors were also well received. The reader could experience Jock's concern and interest for the interviewee whom he brings right out onto the page. I, myself, have been interviewed by Jock and felt his strong personal interest. The whole experience of being interviewed helped me to better reflect on our topic of what life was like in our BA area 25 years ago. Jock's series of articles on Jimmy Roberts, our music maven of W. 103rd Street at WEA, took us right along with Jimmy as he was on the cusp of something new, creating more and more off-Broadway shows. We were there with him step by step, note by note.

Among others whom Jock has highlighted or supported is his daughter, Sarah Miller-Davenport. Sarah wrote and edited an issue of the BA news-letter as a college project. She has inherited her father's talent for writing and presenting issues in a passionate, thorough, logical and balanced manner.

Jock's pleas for new BA Board Directors and for funds to support the block guard were always done in such good taste. He had an engaging way to fire us up and want to be a participant and part of our BA, to write out a larger or extra check or come to a meeting or volunteer where needed.

The BA newsletter continued to in-

form us of our usual Halloween Parade, Holiday Caroling and Annual Meetings, of our special events such as the Pan Asian Rep Theater Party, walking tours, BA 25th and 30th Anniversaries and the Centennial of neighborhood buildings at 303-311 W. 103rd Street. Jock added much enthusiasm in reporting these special BA activities.

When a new school moved into 308 W. 103rd Street Jock wrote about their important mission to better equip future students to enter mainstream educational facilities. There are events, issues and groups we would never know about in the area of our BA without Jock listening and noticing what might be of interest to his readership. That has included the 24th Precinct and the Police Alliance Group, co-op fundamentals and rent law changes, movie crews, expanded recycling, the eyesore that once existed at 241-251 W. 103rd Street and the West Side One Stop for Seniors, formerly on Broadway.

Jock has had the opportunity over the decade to work with several co-editors, Deanna Medina, Alan Leverenz and David Reich who will now take over the editorship.

We wish Jock all the best with all the free time he will now have. Of course Jock has agreed to occasionally write articles or opinion pieces so we will still have the benefit of his humor, passion, sensitivity, balance and writing skills. As we pass the torch from Jock to David we realize what a valuable community tool our BA newsletter is.

Thank you again, Jock, for all your time and effort year after year to present us with such informative and enjoyable newsletters. We know the time and care you took with each newsletter, with each story and with each word. We are lucky and grateful. And we still look forward to your frequent occasional writings in the newsletter.

Funds Sought to Restore Firemen's Memorial Island

Riverside Park Fund has begun a campaign to raise money for restoration of the park from 97th to 104th Street just east of Riverside Drive. The area, which acts as a buffer between the residential buildings and the Drive's traffic, is heavily used and showing significant signs of wear.

Since September 11, the Memorial to the City's firemen at 100th Street in the park has been a gathering place for many who left flowers and candles to honor those who lost their lives in the destruction of the World Trade Center.

According to a recently distributed brochure, the Fund seeks to "enhance the plantings, revive the lawns, and ensure their survival." The plan would also "install an irrigation system ..., add shrubs and ground covers... and install permanent fencing around principal planted areas..."

The budget for this project is \$60,000 of which \$25,000 has been received from the Levitt Foundation. Our neighbors at 310 RSD have been working on the plantings between 103rd and 104th Street. As a result, the Fund seeks to raise \$30,000 to complete the project.

Contributions may be sent to Riverside Park Fund at 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 249, New York, NY 10115. Further information is available at (212) 870-3070 or www.riversideparkfund.org.

The West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association Newsletter

Published about four times a year. **David L. Reich**, editor. Comments and questions welcomed. Send US Mail to Newsletter Editor, P.O. Box 1940, New York, NY 10025 or email to dlreich@earthlink.net. Phone messages may be left at (212) 866-5769 or faxes may be directed to (212) 866-5916.

New Delhi Boy Makes Good

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kind of life is this?" I asked myself." But soon, like almost everyone else in Manhattan, he was working hard. He found a job as a waiter at the West Side Story Restaurant, 95th and Columbus, which supported his studies in film-making at The New School and NYU. "I waited tables. Sometimes I worked as a cameraman."

"How did you find your filming jobs?" I asked. A waiter set down a sumptuous plateful of saag paneer in front of the diner to my right. I reminded myself that this was not a restaurant review.

"Word of mouth. Professors helped me." Since Chander is a vibrant, expressive man, I thought perhaps he'd been an actor. "I had a line or two of dialogue here and there. A little work in the soaps. I was a taxi driver on City. I still get about \$15 a year in residuals." It was hard not to turn the interview into a question-and-answer session about film-making and acting. As a waiter passed us with another plateful of food, bhel puri with a side of garlic nan, I nudged my attention back to business. What about Chander's other restaurants?

"Two on Amsterdam. Café Con Leche, one between 95th and 96th, and another between 80th and 81st. Then there's my vegetarian restaurant, Ayurveda, 94th and Amsterdam. It has a holistic, Indian-based menu. No liquor. You eat what the chef prepares that day."

Chander met his wife, Karen, a native of Massachusetts, when they were both working at West Side Story Restaurant. Karen is a dancer and choreographer. Presently she is a full-time mother to their five-year-old daughter and ten-year-old son.

As I sipped my wine, I reflected on

the person sitting beside me: engineering student (smart), film-making student and husband of a dancer (artistic), good-looking man who has done some acting (be still my heart), and owner of four successful restaurants (yum). Best of all, perhaps, a person who has not been afraid to leave home, travel, and explore his interests and abilities.

"How do you explain your success?" I asked.

"By doing more than is necessary and expected."

And Chander likes people. From the friends and acquaintances swirling around him, attracted by his friendliness and energy, I could tell that people like him. He has made a place for himself on the Upper West Side.

Since 1988 his restaurants have sponsored neighborhood baseball, basketball, and soccer teams that play in Riverside Park and Randall's Island. He buys uniforms for the kids and rents fields and courts for them to play on. He, himself, played cricket in India. "But I can't do that here. I play tennis." He is vice-president of Riverside Clay Tennis Association. "They needed a few thousand dollars," he said. Every year at the 96th Street clay courts he helps sponsor a one-day event with the Association which includes exhibition matches (Tim Mayotte and Patrick McEnroe have participated), and an auction event where ordinary people can play (i.e., be beaten by) a tennis star. A large picnic is always part of the day.

Chander is a member of the Advisory Board of the Broadway Mall Association. He declines to take credit for plantings and upkeep of the greenery that runs down the center of Broadway. He does, however, help recruit merchants to underwrite expenses.

Straus Park, at Broadway and 106th,

is a favorite of Chander's. "Everybody loves the park," he says. "It is fabulous!" He is currently the only commercial contributor to its maintenance, according to Leon Auerbach, co-chair of Friends of Straus Park. Auerbach hopes to use the example of Chander's generosity to encourage more business contributions from the neighborhood.

The interview is winding down. "Life has been wonderful," he says. "You do so little and people give you so much."

I stand and we shake hands. "Please have another glass of wine," he says.

"I have to go," I reply. "Thank you, Mr. Malik."

But how about one of those wonderful-looking plates I see at that table by the window? Tikka biryani. Tandoori shrimp. Ras malai. . . .

But then, this is not a restaurant review.

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The Ancestors of Alexandria House

By Marlene Lee

Editor's Note: In connection with several history projects in our neighborhood, the Newsletter is publishing a series of articles on the buildings and residents that gave shape and character to this area. This is the second part of the article on the history of Alexandria House (250 W. 103rd St.).

Marinus Willett was a Revolutionary War hero, then Sheriff, and, briefly, Mayor of New York City. On February 23, 1786, he advertised his land (encompassed within our present-day Block 1874 which is bounded by West End Avenue and Amsterdam, 102nd street and 103rd) as follows: "All and singular the said Dwelling House Barn and Tract piece or parcel of Land situate lying and being at Bloomingdale in the Out Ward of the City of New York aforesaid. . . . Beginning a little above the Bank where the Fence divides. . . thence South Fifty one Degrees East four chains and forty links. . . beginning at a certain Stone Eleven inches from a Beech tree in the Southwest corner of the Fence. . . ."

The ad apparently worked, because a John Jones bought it. (According to L.B. Phelps Stokes in *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, the sheriff/mayor sold the property to satisfy a debt.)

As long as we've mentioned war hero Willett (Willett Street in Lower Manhattan is named after him), we should consider the Battle of Harlem Heights. It happened in Bloomingdale during the Revolutionary War and is described by Mott in *New York of Yesterday*.

In August of 1776 the Americans retreated from defeats at Long Island and Kip's Bay. In a patriotic act, Mary Lindley Murray (of "Murray Hill") detained British General Howe

and officers at lunch on September 15th in her house at what is now the intersection of Park Avenue and 36th Street while the American Putnam and his command made a disorderly retreat along Bloomingdale Road to within a mile of Washington's headquarters in Washington Heights. That night the British encamped along Aphthorp Lane (in the 90s) and put up fortifications across Manhattan from Hoorn's Hoek on the East River to Striker's Bay on the Hudson (at 96th Street).

American fortifications were along West 147th Street. These were the positions on September 16, 1776. The Connecticut Rangers moved south, screened from view by woods. At sunrise near "The Homestead," at this time owned by Nicholas Jones, they encountered the British who were stationed just south of present Broadway and 104th Street.

There was a sharp skirmish between the Brits and the Americans. The Americans, under Colonel Thomas Knowlton, retreated to Hollow Way (West 125th Street at the Hudson River) where the British followed and humiliated them by blowing a hunting horn, as if they had cornered a fox.

General Washington called the Battle of Harlem Heights a "brisk little skirmish." About thirty Americans, including Knowlton, and fourteen British soldiers were killed.

Landmarks around this time were Striker's Bay, a section of Blooming-

dale extending from what is now Central Park to Riverside Drive and from 96th to 99th Street. Gerrit Striker had settled at 96th Street near the Hudson in 1764 and named his mansion "Striker's Bay." The home was used as a temporary hospital for the wounded during the Battle of Harlem Heights.

Hopper's Lane ran east and west somewhere in what are now the 50s, Harsenville Road in the 70s, and Cross Road (later Aphthorp Lane) in the 90s. Other roads later branched off toward 115th Street and Riverside Drive, ending at the barn of Nicholas de Peyster (who owned the land where, in 1818, the Bloomingdale Asylum for mentally disturbed patients was built, to be replaced much later by the campus of Columbia University).

The Commissioners' Plan of 1811 passed into law the grid system for Manhattan's streets. Undaunted by the fact that the streets weren't built yet, city fathers posted 1,549 yard-high, white marble markers at imagined intersections all the way up to 155th St.

Work didn't begin on Riverside Park until 1877. William Tweed ("Boss Tweed"), it was felt, was more interested in developing the Upper East Side where he owned property, though admittedly, the level terrain on the east side was easier to grade, dig up, and build on. Driven by the new public transport (trolley tracks had reached West 81st Street by 1879, West 110th Street by 1881) and pressure to gentrify, developers on the West Side began changing street names. In 1880 Eleventh Avenue became West End Avenue. Three years later Eighth Avenue was Central Park West.

During this period of advancement toward the Upper West Side, apartment hotels were becoming quite common. Between 700 and 800 of them were

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Building Curators Meet

In late April, volunteer curators for several buildings within the Block Association's area met to discuss the resources that can help uncover our neighborhood's past. Ginger Lief, leader of this local history project, joined with Penelope Kim (240 W. 102 St.), Anne Hollister (252 W. 102 St.), Marlene Lee (250 W. 103 St.), Cherie Tredanari (307 W. 103 St.), and Mildred Speiser (310 RSD) in reviewing library, City office and other sources of architectural and personal histories in New York City.

As an example of what this research can turn up, here is Ginger's description of the mansion (and its owner) that occupied the land on which 300 Riverside Drive was built.

"Eighty years ago a fine residence stood on the northeast corner of Riverside Drive and W.102nd Street. It was built from 1887 to 1888 for William F. Foster who lived there with his wife, Bertha. The architect of the brick mansion was Halstead Parker Fowler (1859-1911). It was demolished in 1922 and replaced by today's fourteen story and basement apartment building for which the architect was George Frederick Pelham (1866-1937).

"Our early neighborhood home builder, Foster, was born in Taunton, England, October 11, 1841, and came to America in 1856. He invented the Foster glove fastening which he introduced to New York City in 1876, and then went on to develop a large and successful business. Earlier, he was in the glove business in Chicago but was financially ruined there by the fire of 1871. Foster died from cancer at the age of 54 at his Riverside Drive home on December 3, 1895."

If you would like to discover the story of your building and join our archival project please send e-mail to VLief369@aol.com or write to Ginger at P.O. Box 1940, NY, NY 10025.

The Ancestors of Alexandria House

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built for the middle class who didn't want boarding houses. They bore elite names like the Saratoga, Knickerbocker, and Berkeley. For the same reason, "tenements" came to be called "French flats." Later still, "cooperative apartments" replaced "French flats."

Though Bloomingdale Road was finally being upgraded to the Boulevard (Broadway), with two fifty-foot-wide carriageways and a thirty-foot-wide planted median, a *Herald* reporter wrote in 1876 that the lower part of the Boulevard was lined with saloons and shanties, and up around 100th Street you would see only "an occasional cowherd leading his charges to pasture." (Burrows and Wallace.)

Fifty years later things had changed. In the State of New York 1925 census there are no cowherds listed among the 151 residents of the Hotel Alexandria, a typical apartment house built in 1916 (now Alexandria House, 250 West 103rd). For starters, there are 39 housewives on the premises. Other occupations listed are clothing manufacturer, soap salesman, importer, "clothes and such," artist, advertiser, railroad contractor, lawyer, broker, truck manufacturer, consulting engineer, saleslady, bookkeeper, and "Chinaware (husband and wife)." While the overwhelming number were born in the United States, residents come from Australia, Austria, Bohemia, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Panama, and Russia. No resident of the Hotel Alexandria appears in the columns headed "Inmates of Institutions" and "Children Under Age One."

Looking back fifteen years earlier at the same lot, the "Irving" or "Irwin" are listed as renters of a brick house, five stories and a basement, at 250 West 103rd Street, the Hotel Alexandria/Alexandria House location. A

1910 Federal census-taker lists their names as James B., Ester, James L., and Myrtis, and asks the following questions, answers to which are laid out in columns on the census form:

Ownership? "R." ("Rent," presumably.)

Free or mortgaged? Blank.

Able to read? "Yes."

Able to write? "Yes."

Attended school anytime since September 1, 1909? Blank.

Trade or Profession?

"None."

Farm or home? "H."

Survivor of the Union or

Confederate Army or Navy? Blank.

Blind (both eyes)? Blank.

Deaf and dumb? Blank.

Blanks. There are too many blanks. Although we can never fill in all of them, there is satisfaction in trying. Exceptionally helpful in charting my too-quick path through Bloomingdale have been The Office of the City Registry; an anonymous architect at the Department of Buildings; the Local History and Map Rooms of the New York Public Library; the New York Historical Society library; and Ginger Lief's memorandum to our Block Association archive project calling attention to these resources.

Since that day when I first saw the photographs of our neighborhood taken from a parlor window on the Boulevard (Broadway), I'm left with the wish to learn more. To fill in those blanks we need atlases, directories—and something more: imagination and a little time to look out our parlor windows and dream.

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Thank You, Members!

To all of our contributors, heartfelt thanks. Your donations keep the Block Association going and the guard on the street. Names of those who are "paid up" through the current quarter (approximately) appear below; please let us know of errors. As always, we ask that you fill out the envelope stub completely (including your apartment number) and legibly when making your contribution (the stubs are the basis of our record-keeping) and indicate if you prefer anonymity.

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315 W. 103 St.: Tuttle
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317 W. 103 St.: Steinberg
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855 West End Ave.: Ausubel, Hawke, Henwood, Huey, Rottenbach/McKennan, Solomon, Solowiejczyk/Porjesz, Yudkovsky/Chang
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862 West End Ave.: Dikegoros, Hewitt
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878 West End Ave.: Foreman, Fujinaka, Hoos/Nossel, Ivolin, Lansdale, Lenes/Quattrochi, Mauceri/Ross, Perowsky/Warren, Santucci, Schoenberg, Shaw, Stearns
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Treewells Planted By Volunteers

Thank you to the fifteen volunteers from our Block Association who came out on April 20th, a beautiful spring day, to help us plant. Alan Cary organized the volunteers as he had last year. Due to Alan's diligence we had an excellent team at work.

With the drought conditions that are predicted for the summer we planted a lot of ivy and pachysandra and some sturdier plants as well. Special thanks to the Block Association members who brought their own flowers.

The key for this summer will be to make sure the treewells stay watered. Success will be assured if residents of each building take responsibility for watering adjacent plantings. If you have the organizing spirit, get your neighbors to sign up for this important task. Let's show our respect and concern for Mother Nature and the joy these plantings bring to us all!

P(ee)S: there is another form of "watering" which is definitely NOT good for trees and plants. Do our neighborhood trees a favor and ask the walker of any offending dog to please take the dog to the curb, or at least away from the treewell, when it needs to urinate. Raising the consciousness of dog walkers on this subject will benefit the whole community.