



Adventure Activities Proposed for Riverside Park

By David L. Reich

A new park administrator seeking “21st century” activities, a company whose business has closed in Orlando, an inaccurate newspaper article and a misleading website have come together in the latest protest on the Upper West Side.

The focus of the meetings, the e-mails and the outrage is a proposal from the Florida company to operate a concession in Riverside Park at 105th Street. Called “Adrenaline Heights”, it would offer instruction in circus-related aerial skills such as trapeze and tightwire as well as rock climbing and rappelling on a constructed wall. Closer to the ground the menu includes trampoline, tumbling, juggling and stunt training. One of the more controversial features in the proposal is a tethered hot air balloon that would rise over the site alongside the West Side Highway to give its passengers a unique view of the New York City skyline.

Should the balloon ever go up, its riders would see their friends below in a 50 foot by 200 foot area just north of the volleyball courts between the highway and the Hudson Beach Café. Currently unused, occupied by ten trees and broken pavement, and much small-

Continued on Page 5

The West 102nd & 103rd Streets Block Association NEWSLETTER

Malibu Hotel: Bad Old Days?

By Marlene Lee

A prominent article in *The New York Times* on August 23 pegged our area as “A Neighborhood That’s Happening,” but what’s happening at the Malibu Hotel is arousing strong concerns.

Actually three adjacent buildings, 2686, -88, and -90 Broadway, on the southeastern corner at 103rd, the hotel is owned by Branic International Realty, which, in turn, is owned by Hank S. Freid. Speakers at both the June 2nd, 2002 meeting of Community Board 7 and Police Precinct 24 Community Council’s June meeting reported that this past spring the NYC Housing Resources Administration (HRA) began contracting with the Malibu to house homeless persons suffering from HIV and AIDs. Unlike many neighborhood facilities and half-way houses, there are no social services on site.

Formerly, the Malibu Hotel’s main source of guests appeared to be foreign tourists, says Brian Schneider, one of the managers of the restaurant, Urban America, located on the ground floor of the 2686 building. Hank Freid, his landlord, contracted with him in April to provide a continental breakfast for tourist guests of the hotel. The next month, says Schneider, the 30 breakfasts he had been serving decreased to three. He estimates that around that time the City HRA clients suddenly

went from 25 per cent to nearly 100 percent of the hotel’s population. The day I interviewed him, August 10th, he had served one breakfast.

“It’s completely SRO now,” he said. “People throw things out the window. Every morning the sidewalk is destroyed.” The John Doe Fund employees who clean sidewalks in the city have helped in his efforts to keep the area in front of the restaurant clean. But it’s not enough. “A guy from the Malibu broke my menu stand by ramming it against the window frame. He wanted to fight. I didn’t. When I called the 24th Precinct I was told, ‘Sorry. I’m understaffed.’ ‘Well, just send me an auxiliary officer, somebody in a uniform,’ I said. The police department couldn’t do it.”

For a few years now, Schneider has been happy to see the neighborhood gain some successful new businesses like his own: Henry’s, the Silver Moon,

Continued on Page 3

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 October 8 and November 12.

Restaurant Review: Carne

By Jock Davenport

Though **Carne** opened only last March, it has managed to attract a loyal following of patrons living within a ten-block radius of its location at Broadway and 105th St. Even more, thanks in part to recent favorable reviews in *The New York Times* and in *Paper* and *Time Out/New York*, the reputation of this instant neighborhood fixture now extends well beyond Bloomingdale. Carne has become what publicists and promoters call a destination attraction: thanks to its down-home cuisine, arresting décor, and sprightly human component, it lures diners from all over the city.

It also draws a mixed clientele — not only outsiders from the East Side and elsewhere but Columbia students and faculty, young professionals in relationships verging on the serious, families, the wine and cheese crowd from WEA and RSD, even older folks (myself included) who not only savor the food but get a retro buzz from the high-energy eclecticism of the place. At the hands of designers Jonathan Ray and Alex Grossman, the interior of Carne flaunts a trendy pastiche of styles:

postmodern, Alvar Aalto Scandinavian, and 1950s luncheonette. Somehow it all hangs together. Co-owner Misha Kliot, a Russian emigré who honed his contracting skills restoring historic landmarks in St. Petersburg, did a capital job in translating blueprints into tactile reality.

At the elevated bar with the big-screen, high-definition TV at one end can be found mostly young people, couples and singles, who take their professional sports seriously and nurse more than one drink before heading off to the dining area. In the restaurant proper you can expect to find on the à la carte menu a decent selection of American and continental dishes, all carefully thought out and lovingly realized by Larry Good, the chef and other co-owner. Service is prompt and thoughtful; dishes are brought to your table with quiet efficiency by the wait staff, and your water glass is refilled without asking. Come with an appetite: portions are generous.

Be sure to order one of the appetizers, which range in price from \$4.00 to \$8.25. My favorites are the blue corn calamari and Vidalia onion rings. Main dishes (\$8.75-\$15.75) include chicken,

fish, and lamb dishes, a vegetarian plate, and burger with fries for the youngsters. You can order one of three different pasta dishes ((\$11.25-\$15.25)). Steaks are a house specialty with ribeye, filet mignon, shell, skirt, and New York strip to choose from (\$12.75-\$24.75), plus seven different sauces to accompany them. On a recent visit I cast all prudence aside and ordered a filet mignon, which arrived done to perfection, slathered with Béarnaise sauce. Please don't tell my doctor.

The desserts are to die for. If you have a sweet tooth, be advised to leave room for sinful extravagances like bread pudding or pecan pie à la mode. Either one is worth three days of carrots and cottage cheese as atonement.

Carne is open from 11:30 a.m. to midnight from Monday to Saturday. On Sundays, brunch begins at 10:30 a.m. and ends at 4:00 p.m., and the restaurant closes at midnight. Every night the bar stays open even later. Reservations for parties of six or more can be made by calling (212) 663-7010. All major credit cards are accepted. Soon, I've been told, you'll be able to dine outdoors on sidewalk tables.

Philip Kargbo Back as Block Guard

After several weeks away from our neighborhood, Philip Kargbo returned to making his rounds as our block guard in July. Philip is looking out for our safety from 5:00 p.m. to midnight Mondays through Thursdays and from 6:00 p.m. to the following 1:00 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. (Steven Diaz is on duty on Sundays.) If you should see Philip in his blue uniform and cap, please say hello.

Volunteer Needed for Website

The Block Association has received an offer to join a neighborhood website where our Newsletter and other pertinent information could be published. This is a great opportunity which we can take if a volunteer with appropriate skills would step forward to help out. Are you that person? For more information, please contact the Newsletter editor at (212) 866-5769 or dlreich@earthlink.net.

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.

Malibu Hotel: Bad Old Days?

Continued from Page 1

and others. "People who live on 96th Street could say, 'Let's go north for dinner.' But in two or three weeks," says Schneider, "Hank Freid has turned the clock back five years." Schneider has sued for rent abatement. "We didn't get the environment we expected when we moved in. Now Hank Freid won't talk to me."

Schneider is surprised by the speed with which the Malibu population has changed. "If I want a permit for café tables on the sidewalk, it takes weeks and weeks, with inspections and approvals and lots of red tape." He suspects that Branich Realty has not complied with City building regulations. He has asked the Fire Department and Building Department for inspections.

Police presence has improved in the last month or so. "I don't see people drinking their Colt 45s in front of my restaurant the way I did in May and June. I don't see the drug deals and the prostitutes that I saw. My business has picked up again." Urban America is a pleasant restaurant, mid- to upscale, with good food. "We have a children's menu," Schneider says. "We encourage families to eat here. I can't tolerate the kind of street activity that we've been seeing."

Inside the Malibu, things are not good, according to Michael Ouellette, SRO tenant and president of the Malibu Hotel Tenants Association. Ouellette originally checked in as a tourist. "Upon registration, if you requested a lease, you automatically became a rent-stabilized tenant." Now, according to Ouellette, the management is trying to get rid of him. Tenants pay approximately \$90 a week for a room and shared bathroom, while the City pays \$85 a day for each HRA client it places there.

The HRA clients, for the most part,

say Ouellette and Walter Bushell, another member of the Tenants Association, are HIV-positive, or have opportunistic infections or full-blown AIDs. "It's a walk-up," Bushell says. "There is no handicap access. The HIV/AIDs patients are really gasping by the time they climb the stairs and get to their rooms. Hank Freid took the air conditioners out when he started getting the HRA clients. It's unbearable on the top floors."

Ouellette suspects a resident is dealing drugs. "People are always banging on my door to find out what room [the resident] lives in or if I know when [the resident] will be back. The hotel buzzes anybody in. I finally told [the resident], 'I don't want any dealing here. Take it to the street.'" To stop the incessant knocking on his door, he turned up the volume on his hand-held police scanner. "It keeps them away," he says.

"There are fights every day," Bushell adds, "and the police come around a lot to pick up people on outstanding warrants."

2690 Broadway, one of the three Malibu buildings, is still under an order to vacate, according to Ouellette and Bushell, and is currently illegally occupied until a certificate of occupancy is obtained.

Ouellette accuses hotel management of falsely charging him with several counts of menacing and stalking. He was arrested, taken to the 24th Precinct, and, after six hours, transported to the police facility at 123rd Street. He was released, he says, on his own recognition after a hearing before a judge at 100 Centre Street. He is required to appear in court once a month and is represented by a Ms. Bennett, staff attorney of the criminal defense division.

Ouellette and Bushell state that there have been inspections of the hotel buildings but no enforcement.

"Why do you stay?" I asked.

"The City won't clean up the Malibu," he says. "I want to live here. Somebody has to do it." He formerly lived at the Royal York on West 97th Street, another Branich Realty hotel. There, he says, he learned how to research the problems he discovered in the building and its management (Ouellette's e-mail address incorporates the letters SRO.) When he broke up with his girl friend, he says, he moved into the Malibu. He hopes to reach some sort of settlement with Freid after the hotel is brought into compliance with applicable City regulations. He has already been offered money to leave, he says, as has Bushell. Ouellette claims that Democratic District Leader Carmen Quinones offered to negotiate a settlement with him on behalf of Hank Freid to vacate the building in exchange for \$75,000, his silence, and her agreement to turn over evidence of Malibu illegalities to the Attorney General's Office. She also offered other inducements, he says, on behalf of Freid, such as dropping current criminal charges brought against Ouellette.

"We have a Democratic Party official helping the landlord empty a building," says Bushell. Quite the opposite, says Quinones, who is running for State Committee of the Democratic Party. Ouellette asked for \$100,000, she says, to be shared with other members of the Tenants Association. She taped some of her conversations with him. "I think he's crazy," she adds. "He goes from place to place soliciting money." According to her, he not only asked for \$100,000, but expected 25 percent of payments made to certain other tenants.

"Is the Malibu Hotel in compliance with applicable building regulations?" I asked.

Continued on Page 4

Malibu Hotel: Bad Old Days?

Continued from Page 3

“Yes. Hank Freid is in compliance with City regulations,” she responded.

[The Department of Buildings website shows a total of 27 open DOB violations and three open complaints listed for the three addresses that comprise the Malibu Hotel. One of the open complaints is for illegal conversion of an apartment building to an SRO.]

“What can be done to eliminate the loitering, drug sales, and prostitution that people in the neighborhood report seeing?” I asked.

“First of all, prostitution is supposedly a problem,” she says, “but as far as I know, no one has seen it. Hank Freid, Deputy Inspector Spinella of the 24th Precinct, and I had a meeting this past Friday [August 9th], and Hank has

joined the Trespassing Program.” When asked to describe the program, Quinones said police officers go into the Malibu every day for 28 days and do “a vertical,” which is a check of every hallway in the hotel. Persons who cannot identify themselves as residents may receive a summons. The posted hotel policy now is to allow one guest per resident at a time into the building.

The night manager at the Malibu wouldn't answer questions nor would Glen, the day manager, who did offer to find someone who could. I did not hear back from him. While I was on hold waiting for Glen, I listened to a taped message about the Malibu Hotel. A woman with a British accent extolled its location near Columbia University, Grant's Tomb, and Riverside Park.

The Human Resources Administration

referred me to the director of press affairs who hasn't returned my call.

With the varying viewpoints and noticeable silences, separating fact from fiction can be difficult. One thing seems certain: all is not well in the Malibu. The Trespassing Program is scheduled to end in early September. Without more supervisory and social services than have thus far been in evidence, the Malibu Hotel may continue to have a disruptive influence on pedestrians, businesses, and residents in the neighborhood.

Annual Halloween Parade Scheduled

The Block Association's annual Halloween parade, story-telling and refreshments event is scheduled for Thursday, October 31 starting at 6:00 p.m. in front of 865 West End Avenue.

Children of all ages are invited to bring their parents, grandparents or other scary adults, in costume, of course, to join the fun. This is a neighborhood tradition that's been going on so long no

one remembers when it started!

If you can contribute to the enjoyment with baked goods, candy or anything else for the party, or you can help set up (fill the goody bags) or clean up afterwards, please call Hedy Campbell right away at (212) 865-8524.

Watch for posters just before Halloween with exact time and inclement weather details.

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Adventure Activities Proposed For Riverside Park

Continued from Page 1

er than the “two blocks” mentioned in a July 28 article in *The New York Times*, the space would be enough for five standard brownstones with back yards.

According to Kenneth (KC) Sahl, newly installed as administrator of Riverside Park last fall, the proposal was one of two received in response to a request for new activities in the area of the park which currently includes soccer and baseball fields, a skateboarding area and the neighboring volleyball courts. As a concession, the owner would pay fees to the City and collect fees from users. The money received by the City would go into the General Fund, not the coffers of the Parks Department or Riverside Park.

Money is at the root of much of the opposition. At a rally in the Park on August 31, Batya Lewton, of the Coalition for a Livable West Side, saw the proposal as “a foot in the door to commercialize scarce public land.” Bill Crain, a local resident wearing a sign saying “Keep Parks Free for all Kids,” told CBS radio, “There shouldn’t be fees that will exclude people.” The proposal includes a range of prices from \$3 for juggling and clowning classes, and \$8 for tightwire up to \$35 for “aerial arts” and \$45 for trapeze lessons.

Pricing was at the top of James Dowell’s list of negatives. He is the Executive Director of the Riverside Park Fund who described his position on the proposal as one of “mixed feelings.” He suggested that free days or free tickets for non-profit organizations that serve low-income families might alleviate this problem.

The hot air balloon particularly caught Dowell’s eye. “It’s just a ride,” he said. One of the selling points of the operation, proclaimed on the company’s web-

site, www.adrenalineheights.com, is “No passive rides here! Everything at Adrenaline Heights is human-powered.” Sahl was also less than enthusiastic about keeping this feature.

The website also lists the Riverside Park address, hours (9 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week) and fee schedules as if Adrenaline Heights was already in operation in New York City. Richard Aiken, who answered the Florida telephone number listed on the website, explained that he had modified the website when the Orlando operation, on space rented from a hotel, went out of business. He acknowledged that the photos were from Orlando and some of the information was not up-to-date with the Riverside Park proposal.

This sort of change in the use of city park land is considered by Community Board 7 and, more specifically, its Parks, Libraries and Cultural Affairs Committee. The city’s Parks Department is not bound by the findings of the Board or its Committee but Sahl has said the Department would not adopt a proposal that the Board had rejected.

In this case, the proposal was reviewed and accepted for a one season tryout at the July 11 Parks Committee meeting on a 3-2 vote with only half the members in attendance. In contrast to complaints about people being excluded, its resolution says “the equipment will give city kids who don’t have the luxury of leaving the city to experience this popular equipment the opportunity to do it right near home.”

Aiken thought he had a deal needing only the appropriate signatures. Then, following a rising clamor against it, the proposal was sent back to the Parks Committee for further consideration. That should take place at the next public meeting of the Committee on Thursday, September 12 at 7:00 p.m. in the

Board’s offices at 250 W. 87th Street.

Sahl said that he has no desire to force anything into Riverside Park against residents’ wishes. “Let’s give this a try. If it doesn’t work out, the contract can be cancelled,” he said. He, Dowell and, especially, Aiken seemed perplexed that much of the opposition appeared based on inaccuracies. When asked if any of the opponents had contacted him through the telephone number or e-mail address listed in the website Aiken replied, “Of course not. That would have been the rational thing to do.”

Aiken appeared to be hedging his bets on Riverside Park. He said his company was looking into another site in New York City in case this proposal failed.

Crime Watch

Several incidents in our neighborhood in the past few months leave the impression that crimes, from the serious to the petty, are on the rise.

- A clergyman from the church at 310 RSD came to the assistance of a man on the street who then attacked him. Our block guard helped call the police.

- A restaurant deliveryman was attacked and badly beaten at 1:15 a.m. The police came quickly and arrested two suspects while two others got away.

- Several women leaving the 103rd St. subway station have been attacked and robbed. No one has been arrested.

- Plants have been stolen several times from planters on 103rd Street between West End Avenue and Riverside Drive. No one has been apprehended.

If you have information about a crime, please call 911 immediately or call the 24th Precinct at (212) 678-1811. A report to the Newsletter editor at (212) 866-5769 or dreich@earthlink.net will help keep the neighborhood informed.

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.

235 W. 102 St.: Baxter, Bybee, Crosby/Jakobsen, Daniel/Zawistowski, Jonas, Kato, Kenyon, Kirkpatrick, Knight, Kostelanetz, Lyman, Mitchell, Nelson, Novembre, Page, Purrington, Robertson, Roth, Timperley, Van Fraasen, Wildish, Witter, Wolfe **240 W. 102 St.:** Cope/Becker, Daly, Eisenstadt, Field, Kim/Nissenbaum, Weber, Workman/Miller **247 W. 102 St.:** Dunn, Pierson, Pierson/Robbins **251 W. 102 St.:** Mirsky/Bommarito **308 W. 102 St.:** Goerl **310 W. 102 St.:** Albert **311 W. 102 St.:** Fitzpatrick, Hussey **312 W. 102 St.:** Plutzik/Goldwasser **313 W. 102 St.:** Betts **315 W. 102 St.:** Gallup/Turner, Hansen, Mandel/Brown, Weil/Sinclair **318 W. 102 St.:** Erselcuk **250 W. 103 St.:** Agathocleous, Crenson, Lee, O'Brien/Boyle, Rahmani, Stribling/Uss, Sue/Lin, Wall, Wolkoff **254 W. 103 St.:** Feldman/Hasenpusch **303 W. 103 St.:** Frishauf **305 W. 103 St.:** Lang/Bertin **307 W. 103 St.:** Tredanari **315 W. 103 St.:** Tuttle **316 W. 103 St.:** Kleidon/Ahmed **321 W. 103 St.:** Woych **855 West End Ave.:** Ausubel, Hawke, Henwood, Rottenbach/McKenna, Solomon, Solowiejczyk/Porjesz, Yudkovsky/Chang **862 West End Ave.:** Hewitt **864 West End Ave.:** Milek **865 West End Ave.:** Babka/Feldman, Beels, Blumm, Carroll/Bartlik, Chase, Daniel, Davidge/Lott, Eisenstein, Gurman, Hanrahan, Higgins/Lyon, Koplów, Leshen/Mota, Lowenthal, MacGregor,

McCormack, Nye, Oppenheimer, Perchanok, Rajah/Greenfield, Sands, Wight, Zakrzewski **870 West End Ave.:** Wuorinen **875 West End Ave.:** Babush, Baney/Bentley, Batterman, Benderly, Browning, Canin, Canin/Sauer, DeCurtis/MacDowell, Felton, Fricke/Klimley, Fuerstein, Garbers, Gillman, Greggs, Grosz/Fisch, Hausman, Hicks, Hochman-Reid, Humphreys, Hyatt, Keane, Lasher, Leiman, Levine, Lohr/Trucco, Malatzky, Manley, March/Laferrère, McDermott, McKittrick, Monderer, Morrison/Roth, Queler, Rando-Chanon, Reich, Reid, Rogers, Rosenfeld/Stein, Rubel, Russo/Conovitz, Schajer, Smith, Smith/Chibnik, Stein, Thorne/Peterson, Ward, Williamson, Wincenc, Yahr, Yood **878 West End Ave.:** Foreman, Fujinaka, Hoos/Nossel, Ivolin, Lansdale, Lenes/Quattrochi, Mauceri/Ross, Perowsky/Warren, Shaw, Stearns **884 West End Ave.:** Aronow/Adler, Booth/Newman, Cutler/Young, Davis, Farrier, Juhl, Korman/Sher, Pines, Waldman, Yin **885 West End Ave.:** Baker/Albright, Bikales, Brown/Gruber, Browning, Cryer, Flam, Friedman, Goldberg, Grama, Gruber, Sanders, Spring/Miller, Stokinger/Maas, Tympanick/Gilman, Weiss **299 Riverside Dr.:** Dane/Rabinowitz, Field/Seidel, Goldstein, Goward, Holtz/Horowitz, Kaiden, Kastanis, Kertzner/Langley, Leidner/Ruden, Reich/Dessel, Stern, Tedoff, Titowsky, Toub/Pagano, Wagner/Cecil **300 Riverside Dr.:** Abramski, Alfonso/Gouck, Blumberg/Targownik, Caggiano, Clarke, Cummins, DeRosa/Margold, Edelman, Fain, Faux/Willig, Flint, Fox, Frizell, Halberstam/Cohen, Hall, Harris, Larned, Lassiter, Levit, Livingstone, Meer, Mills, Murphy, Paul, Plum/Rocks, Rack, Rapp/Zycherman, Reiner/Lally, Ross/Myers, Sameth/Havazelet, Schiff, Seget/LaBasse, Serra, Sibbison/Schiff, Simon, Sinaiko, Smith/Silverman, Stone, Taus, Vaz, Vinicor, Wallace, Weissberg **305 Riverside Dr.:** Astakhov/McGinn, Avidon, Cherry, Colon, Curtis, Doty, Ebertowski, Fellenbaum,

Gold, Hancock, Hancock, Hoffman, Jacoby, Juviler/Stephens, Krumholz, Marks, Meyer, Minerva, Pi-Sunyer **310 Riverside Dr.:** Barnum, Barter, Batts, Cooper, DeCurtis, Deming, Donohue/Rando, Fort, Godshall, Hagiwara, Holness/Levine, Huber, Hugus, Kimmel, Levine, Mahoney, Piper, Podrasky, Ralph, Shanahan **Other:** Gehron **Landlords/Co-ops:** 240 W. 102 St., 249 W. 102 St., 252 W. 102 St., 308 W. 103 St., 309 W. 103 St., 855 West End Ave., 875 West End Ave., 878 West End Ave., 885 West End Ave., **Commercial:** Perez, Wohlfarth & Associates, Inc.

Longtime Neighbor Dies

Sophie Eisler, a resident of 300 Riverside Drive since 1950, died on August 10 at the age of 100. Her life spanned a turbulent, eventful century that included two world wars. She spent the first in her native Austria, the second in England, where, with her husband and daughter, she had found refuge from Hitler. Arriving in America in 1945, she worked full time for many years, as well as running a happy home for her family. Widowed in 1975, she continued to live with her daughter. The two could often be seen walking in the neighborhood. Even after her eyesight failed, and when she broke her hip in a recent fall, she regained her strength and mobility with dauntless determination.

She loved all beautiful things: nature, art, literature, and especially music. She was a fine avocational pianist and a tireless, sympathetic listener. To the end, her mind remained alert and open, her wide-ranging interests undiminished, her wit and humor sharp. Her compassion and understanding for people never flagged. She is survived by her daughter, several cousins, nieces, and nephew, and many loving friends. She will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her.