



VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS

Jackson Heights – “A Garden in the City”

Volume 34, No. 4
Winter 2023

Jackson Heights
Beautification Group

www.JHBG.org

Good Tidings!



Help the JH community by volunteering at our cleanups and other events!
Go to JHBG.org or e-mail info@jhb.org to sign up!

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On the cover: Art by Kirsten Magnani.

One can imagine the joy a human family felt whilst making this snow family some years ago. The starburst chandeliers adorning the tree are from the Met Opera House at Lincoln Center. The rainbow candles burn as one flame representing everyone of all colors.

**en español
páginas 8-9**

President's Message

BY LESLIE ELLMAN



Season's Greetings, Neighbors! With the brilliance of the fall foliage behind us and the early spring blossoms months away, the Holiday Season in Jackson Heights gives us another opportunity to appreciate and adorn our beautiful neighborhood. In this season of giving, it is wonderful to think about the many gifts that our neighborhood offers us, from the stunning beauty of our architecture and urban forest, to our deep sense of community among neighbors, there is so much to appreciate here! We hope you enjoy this time of year and get to value whatever gifts you already have in your life along with those you may receive. JHBG is proud of our 35-year history of giving and contributing to our community and we are so grateful for all of the support we get back for our work. We hope to see you at our Annual Holiday Lighting, and we wish all of you a very happy and healthy new year!

Leslie Ellman, President



Different cultures use special lights during the holiday season. While their symbolism varies, they brighten the darkness, and wreaths represent eternity.



The warm waters in the Pacific driving the El Niño weather patterns have meant above average temperatures, little snow, and high rates of precipitation this winter.

Editor's Message

For Auld Lang Syne BY MELISSA ZAVALA



With the war in Ukraine but one of several clashes abroad besides that between Israel-Hamas, the Syrian civil war, and the Kashmir conflict, a historic year concludes. Nationally, for the first time in the country's history, an American President was charged 91 times in multiple cases and states, and a Speaker of the House was ousted. Climate change continues to transform our weather patterns, most noticeably this summer with Canadian wildfires that made the air quality in New York City the most polluted globally. With complicated problems abounding, where can we find signs

of optimism? Jackson Heights offers lighter underreported stories to close the year, like those about missing pets reunited with their families, an exceptional neighborhood resident once a summer photographer for President Eisenhower, the emergence of an unexpected relic of retail's past, and more.

We thank everyone for their ongoing support and wish good health and cheer to all in the coming year. Send us your stories and/or ideas and other suggestions. Please share your thoughts by emailing us at info@jhb.org or writing to us by mail at JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

The Jackson Heights Beautification Group Presents

JACKSON HEIGHTS ORCHESTRA

7:00 P.M. **TUES, DEC 12, 2023**
ST. MARK'S CHURCH
 33-50 82ND ST JACKSON HEIGHTS, NY

Concert is free
 \$20 suggested donation
 Visit JHORCHESTRA.ORG/DONATE
 to make a gift to the JHO.





SUSAN METCALF & ALISON KANG **ALEX WEN**
SOLOISTS **INTERIM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**

An evening of beloved masterworks and holiday classics!

Bach: Double Concerto
 Tchaikovsky: Selections from *The Nutcracker*
 Coleridge-Taylor: Christmas Overture
 Handel: "Hallelujah" Chorus ... and more

@JHORCHESTRA **JHORCHESTRA.ORG**

The Annual Holiday Lighting

at JH Post Office will be held on
 December 2nd - 4 p.m. for holiday crafts
 and 5 p.m. for caroling and celebration!



Arts Events



Off Brand 2.0

Off-Brand 2.0 is an exhibition of site-specific artwork created by 21 Queens-based artists exhibited within the retail environment of A.R.T. (Art Retail Therapy) on 37th Ave between 84th and 85th Streets. Grand opening will be on December 2 at 7:30 p.m., and the show will run until January 27 during store hours. Curated by JH Art Talks and A.R.T.

EN CONSTRUCCIÓN Readings.

Saturday December 2nd, 7PM.
 Readings are in-person and in Spanish. Authors present unpublished works for the audience at the bookstore, Librería Barco de Papel, 40-03 80th St.

Celebrating 35 years of "Getting it Done"

BY LESLIE ELLMAN



Along with elected officials, JHBG celebrated first and second presidents, Mike Crowley, now memorialized on the NE corner of 80th Street and 35th Avenue, and Rudy Greco.

On Saturday, October 14, JHBG celebrated its 35th Anniversary! One more rainy weekend did not stop us. We began the day by gathering on 80th Street and 35th Avenue for a street co-naming in honor of Mike Crowley, the organization's first president. Thanks to the hard work of Council Member Krishan's office, we were able to memorialize Mike's life and the work of JHBG on that corner. We stood under umbrellas and a steady rain to reflect on Mike's legacy and the early days of the JHBG.

Later that evening we gathered with neighbors, good friends, volunteers, and community partners at the Jackson Heights Jewish Center to celebrate and honor Rudy Greco, a community pillar and the second president of the JHBG. We are grateful to

everyone for joining us. Reaching this milestone is only possible with community support. Looking back at our beginning and reflecting on the past 35 years has made us optimistic and excited about keeping our work going for the next 35 years and beyond!



The Children's Halloween Parade



This year, the annual Children's Halloween Parade honored long-time community partner from the 115th Precinct, Officer Bobby, for his help with the parade. Suzanne Knobel, President of the Jackson Heights Jewish Center, as well as Senator Jessica Ramos, and Congresswoman Grace Meng, were also honored. Other exciting invitees this year included Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Mr. and Mrs. Met!



The Region is Warming Quickly as Climate Change Impacts Accelerate

A MESSAGE FROM CON EDISON



According to Con Edison's 2023 *Climate Change Vulnerability Study*, temperatures in the New York City region are rising quickly due to climate change, beyond previous 2019 forecasts.

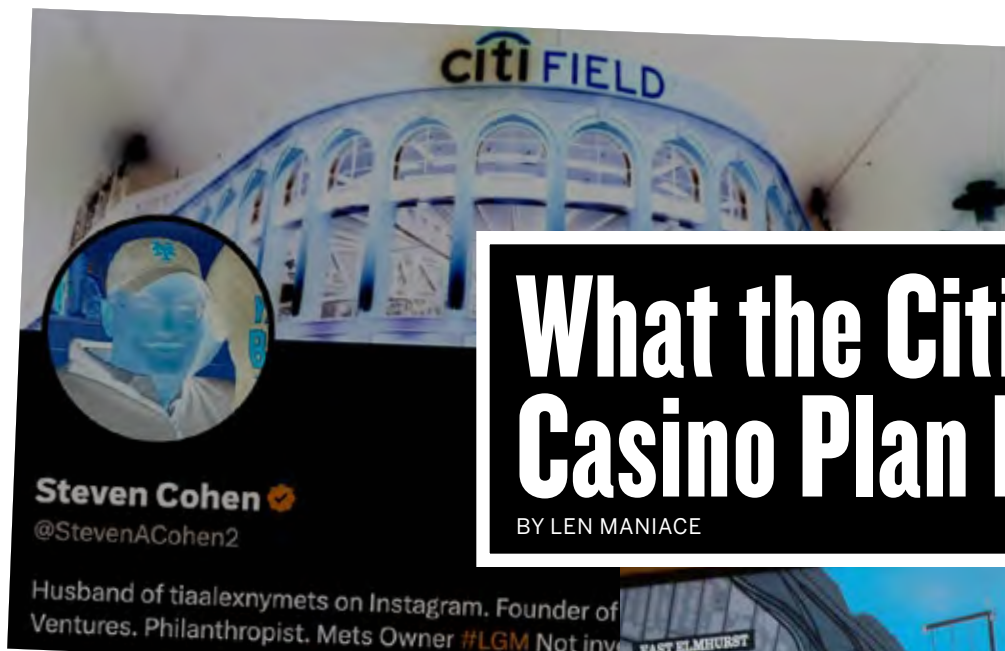
The study calls climate change "an existential and multi-faceted threat around the world", affecting Con Edison's customers and equipment in several ways:

- The risk of flooding, which can damage underground electric delivery equipment, will increase as sea levels rise 16 inches by 2050 and New York experiences five days a year of precipitation exceeding 2 inches. The historical norm is three days per year.
- The annual maximum wind speed in New York City could reach 60 miles per hour in 10 to 15 years, compared to about 50 miles per hour on a historical basis. Strong winds can knock trees and branches onto overhead delivery equipment, causing customers to lose power.
- The risk of ice forming on overhead power lines and trees will increase, causing outages.
- Hurricanes could be more intense and more likely to track toward the Northeast.



"This most recent study provides alarming evidence that climate change will affect the lives of New Yorkers sooner and more severely than previously thought," said Tim Cawley, the chairman and chief executive of Con Edison. "That's why Con Edison is thinking more boldly about ways to strengthen the reliability of our electric delivery system. We are ushering in new sources of renewable energy and making sure that every New Yorker can share in the benefits of a more sustainable grid."

While investing to fortify its infrastructure, Con Edison is leading the region's transition to a clean energy future and supports the environmental goals of New York City and State—building a grid to carry 100 percent clean energy by 2040.



What the Citi Field Casino Plan Leaves Out

BY LEN MANIACE

Steven Cohen

@StevenACohen2

Husband of tlaalexnymets on Instagram. Founder of Ventures. Philanthropist. Mets Owner #LGM Not inv

New York Mets owner and hedge fund manager, Steve Cohen, plans to build a glitzy casino complex next to Citi Field on 50 acres of official parkland. His plan is being propelled by a mammoth lobbying effort.

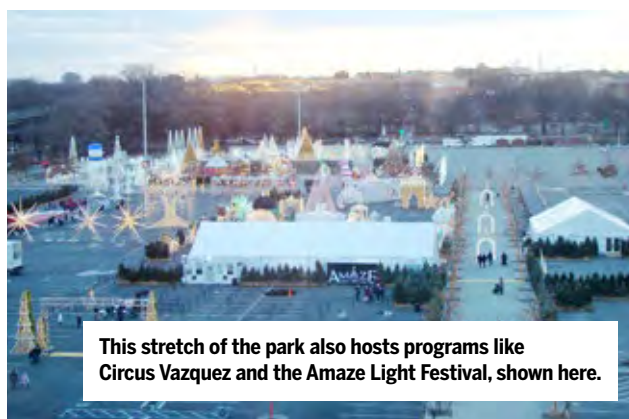
Cohen's representatives have canvassed northwest Queens neighborhoods, promoting the plan's attractive amenities: bikeways, green roofs over the casino/hotel/entertainment complex, and 20 acres of privately owned parkland. They've cited overwhelming public support for the plan over the option of leaving the site an asphalt parking lot. But that binary choice overlooks important points. For instance, is it environmentally sound to build this project on filled marshland when nearby, similarly sited Arthur Ashe Stadium and LaGuardia Airport are among the city's fastest sinking locations, according to a study by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and Rutgers University?

Further, the casino industry is no longer the sure thing it once was, partly due to sports and internet gambling, according to a 2021 study by the University of Kentucky Business School. Studies by two branches of the Federal Reserve Bank, one in Richmond and the other in Boston, found casinos failed to revive a decaying Atlantic City—the reason for bringing gambling to that New Jersey shore town. The nationwide decline of casinos isn't the only problem; a casino at Citi Field would face intense competition from two other new casinos a short trip away under New York State's plans to bring three casinos to New York City and its suburbs.

If the casino were to fail, the remaining hotel and entertainment complex could leave northern Queens with an empty white elephant. Cohen isn't the first Mets' owner with an ambitious plan for the site that relied on a past-its-prime



Described as 50 acres of asphalt, the site for the proposed "Metropolitan Park" is currently the parking lot serving Citi Field.



This stretch of the park also hosts programs like Circus Vazquez and the Amaze Light Festival, shown here.

industry: more than a dozen years ago, the Wilpon family wanted to build a mammoth shopping mall there.

But perhaps the biggest issue unaddressed is the 50 acres of parkland that would be lost to future generations. While the site's current use as a parking lot at Citi Field doesn't look like a park, perhaps one day when the site might not be needed for parking, maybe because parking can be found nearby, or due

to changing ideas about the best locations for sports venues, it can be returned to true parkland that can serve as storm runoff catch basin, biodiversity haven, and recreational area.

New York City needs more actual parkland to help cool the city in the face of climate change. As stewards of parkland don't, we—especially elected officials—have a responsibility to protect this land not only for those living now, but also for future generations? Once land loses its official park status and a huge development is built upon it, parkland is lost forever.

Note: The JHBG opposes the proposed plan based on the alienation of parkland alone. Read our full statement:

jhb.org/2023/05/04/jhb-stand-on-parkland-alienation

Good Tidings!

Underreported Neighborhood Stories of 2023

BY MELISSA ZAVALA



The Photoville Festival at Travers Park

For the past four years, the chain link fences at Travers Park have been transformed into gallery spaces!

What are those banners? The photographs featured there are produced by under-represented artists and promote a love for photography and visual storytelling. This summer, the Photoville Festival transformed 77th Street into a touching exhibit called *Through Our Eyes: A Collective Portrait of Caracas*. Showcasing the work of participants in the Project MiRA (in Spanish meaning *to look*), images taken by young women conveyed stories of struggles, resilience, and joy through collaborative portraits. Venezuelans are the second largest refugee population behind Syria. With six million displaced and a fiscal crisis producing food shortages and crunches in employment and housing, and others, most evacuees find shelter throughout Latin America, some seeking homes in the U.S., sent to NYC from border states. Through the eyes of young girls training in photography,

underrepresented perspectives are rendered visible. MiRA brings mobile photo workshops to young people robbed of their childhoods by state violence, gangs, and other tragedies, offering alternative forms of expression.

Other exhibits include works by Jackson Heights/Elmhurst students, the TransLatinx community TRANSgrediendo, the organization originated by Lorena Borjas, the influential organizer and “mother” to members of the trans community across the city and a resident of Elmhurst. In conjunction with the Queens Museum of Art, this exhibition has also included *Love Does Not Have Borders*, featuring the work of a crochet and embroidery collective based in Queens using handmade textiles to explore the indignities and sense of longing often experienced by immigrants. To see through the eyes, and lenses, of hopeful migrants, find their archived work here:

photoville.nyc/location/travers-park

Buggin' Out ... After the Smoke!

What does a warm winter plus a wet spring equal? Bugs! Besides the spotted lantern fly infestation, New York City was clogged with clouds of winged aphids this spring as plant secretions enhanced by extra rain fed more bugs! It is still unclear if the large bug population benefited from Canadian wildfires, and unlike hazardous air conditions, the insect infestation did not pollute the air for city residents.



X/ @jerm_cohen



A record number of aphids and the invasive spotted lanternfly spread across the city this year.

Two Supermoons in August



A Sturgeon Moon shone brightly over the city on August 2nd at 2:32 p.m. EDT, the first of two Supermoons in one month. A Super Blue Moon followed at 9:36 p.m. on the 30th. When two full moons close to *Perigee* happen in one month, the second full moon is called a Super Blue Moon. It appears slightly brighter than usual Blue Moons, two full moons in one month. *Perigee* refers to the moon's point of orbit when closest to Earth, making its size seem larger. The Sturgeon moon, in turn, is named after an ancient abundant fish sometimes called a "fossil fish" found throughout the U.S. and treasured by Native Americans. The Sturgeon Moon marks a peak fishing period. August falls in the astrological period for the Zodiac sign Aquarius, a fitting time for a Sturgeon Moon.



Raptor Paradise! NYC has become a hotspot for birds of prey, from Cooper's hawks (left), and the more common red-tailed hawks (below).



Fowl Friends: Bird Diversity in the Area Grows

Are you noticing more chatter in our surrounding trees? That could be because our warmer winters are changing bird migration patterns. With more than 200 species of birds in the city, Jackson Heights has become a stop for more migratory birds. Beyond pigeons, starlings, and sparrows, you might have noticed others besides our more interesting resident cardinals and crows, like the tufted titmouse, warblers, common yellow throats, mockingbirds, and more. Ornithologists report that between 20-30 species are expanding their ranges to include NYC. Climate change and the built human environment pose threats to different birds, but some urban raptors have staged a comeback. One of them is the red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), spanning most of North America, NYC is their year-round home. Often spotted along 34th and 35th Avenues, at Travers Park, and elsewhere, red-tailed hawks in our area are benefiting from our large pigeon, rat, and mice population, as well as from an improved urban canopy, and the availability of human structures making excellent nesting options. The growing raptor population means benefits for humans given that these birds offer natural rodent control. Changing an overdependence on rodenticide also means less environmental toxins (to learn more about this, visit:

nycaudubon.org/our-work/conservation/urban-raptors/rodenticides

A Lichen Grows in Jackson Heights

Is that moss growing on street trees? How about those schmears of color on bricks, awnings, small cracks in the sidewalk, and elsewhere? Those streaks of color ranging from black to rust, gray, green, and yellow are likely not mosses or fungi, but lichens. What's the difference? In short, mosses are primitive plants while lichens are something else altogether. Think of a fungi-algae sandwich and you have lichen! If fungi defy categories because they combine both plant and animal kingdoms, imagine the complexity of something that combines fungi and



Lichen (left) and moss (right) differ in appearance, color, and texture; both grow around the area in healthy numbers.

algae! If you haven't already noticed, there are more lichens around the city. Their presence signals good tidings: the city's air quality has clearly improved! Legislation lowering emissions, banning the use of lead in gasoline, regulating idling cars, and other reforms, along with improvements

to our urban canopy, have resulted in the expansion of the lichen population.

We will explore these special neighbors next year when we highlight some of the more common local species, starting with those found at Travers Park. Stay tuned for more!

Mensaje de la presidenta

POR LESLIE ELLMAN

La llegada de las celebraciones de fin de año en Jackson Heights nos da otra oportunidad para apreciar y adornar nuestro bello vecindario. En esta temporada de dar, es grato pensar en los muchos regalos que el vecindario nos ofrece: desde la espectacular belleza de su arquitectura y jardines urbanos hasta nuestro profundo sentido de comunidad. El JHBG está orgulloso de los 35 años de historia de dar y contribuir, y estamos muy agradecidos por todo el apoyo que recibimos a cambio de nuestro trabajo. Esperamos verlos en nuestra ceremonia anual del encendido de luces y les deseamos muy feliz y próspero año nuevo.



tradicional a JHBG, PO Box 720253, Jackson Heights, NY 11372.

Celebramos 35 años de éxito

POR LESLIE ELLMAN

El sábado 14 de octubre, el JHBG celebró su Trigésimo Quinto Aniversario. Empezamos el día reunidos bajo la lluvia en la esquina de la Calle 80 y la Avenida 35 para el conombramiento de una calle en honor a Mike Crowley, el primer presidente de nuestra organización. Más tarde, nos congregamos con vecinos, amigos, voluntarios y socios comunitarios en el Centro Judío de Jackson Heights para celebrar y homenajear a Rudy Greco, segundo presidente del JHBG y pilar de nuestra comunidad. Gracias a todos por acompañarnos. Alcanzar este hito sólo es posible con el apoyo de la comunidad.

Recordar nuestros comienzos y reflexionar sobre los últimos 35 años nos llena de optimismo, y nos entusiasma la idea de seguir trabajando durante los próximos 35 años y más allá.

Los notables de Jackson Heights: Dorian Leigh, una de las primeras supermodelos

POR DAN KARATZAS

Dorian Leigh Parker es reconocida por el comercial "Fire and Ice" de Revlon. Vivió una larga e interesante vida, poco típica para una mujer nacida en 1917. Dorian, sus padres y sus dos hermanas mayores se mudaron de Texas a Jackson Heights a principios de la década de 1920. A sus casi treinta años y con sólo 1.67 m. de estatura, Dorian encontró su vocación en el modelaje y llegó a aparecer en la portada de *Harper's Bazaar* en junio de 1944. Durante la



Festejando el aniversario de la organización y honrando a su segundo presidente Rudy Greco, con la Asambleísta Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas.

década siguiente fue de un éxito a otro en ambos lados del atlántico, elogiada tanto por fotógrafos como por editores del mundo de la moda. Dorian fue, entre otras cosas, la directora de su propia agencia de modelos en Francia, chef cordon bleu, restauradora, una de las primeras empleadas de Martha Stewart y autora. Mujer visionaria con una vida larga llena de aventuras, Dorian murió en 2008 a la edad de 91 años.

Aparece el rótulo de Barney's Ladies Shoes

POR DAN KARATZAS

Había sido cubierto por otros rótulos comerciales durante seis décadas hasta que el dueño del edificio de la esquina suroeste de la Calle 82 y la Avenida 37 decidió restaurar la fachada. Se trata del rótulo de "Barney's Ladies Shoes", que data de la década de 1940. En julio pasado,

Rolando Pujol, un residente de Jackson Heights, dio a conocer el descubrimiento en un post de Facebook y lo incluyó en su boletín de Substack, *The Retrologist*. Pujol hizo un extraordinario trabajo al descubrir la historia de Barney's Ladies Shoes y, sobre todo, al apoyar su preservación por el Museo de Rótulos de Nueva York de Marc Pohanka. Puedes leer la historia completa en rolandopujol.substack.com/p/hidden-no-longer-historic-shoe.

La región se calienta con rapidez mientras el impacto del cambio climático se acelera

MENSAJE DE CON EDISON

Según el "Estudio de la vulnerabilidad del cambio climático" realizado por Con Edison este año, las temperaturas en la zona de la Ciudad de Nueva York van

Mensaje de la editora. ¡Por los buenos tiempos!

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

A pesar de la cantidad de problemas de este año, desde las guerras hasta los masivos incendios forestales, aún es posible encontrar signos de optimismo. Jackson Heights nos regala algunas historias poco conocidas para cerrar el año: la reunión entre mascotas perdidas y sus familias, un excepcional residente que fuera fotógrafo para el expresidente Eisenhower, el descubrimiento de una inesperada reliquia comercial y mucho más. Les agradecemos su apoyo y les deseamos buena salud y alegría para el año que viene. Enviénnos sus historias, ideas, sugerencias y opiniones a info@jhb.org o por correo



¡Reunanse con nosotros el 2 de diciembre para celebrar esta temporada de festejo!

en rápido aumento debido al cambio climático, más allá de las predicciones de 2019. El estudio llama al cambio climático “una amenaza existencial y multifacética en todo el mundo”, que afecta a los consumidores de Con Edison y a su maquinaria de muchas maneras, desde del riesgo de inundaciones hasta el incremento en la intensidad de los vientos y los huracanes. Con Edison está invirtiendo en la fortificación de su estructura al tiempo que lidera la transición hacia una energía limpia y apoya la meta medioambiental de la Ciudad y el Estado de Nueva York: construir una red eléctrica que distribuya cien por ciento de energía limpia para 2040.

Lo que no considera el plan del casino de Citi Field

POR LEN MANIACE

El dueño y gerente de fondos de cobertura de los Mets de Nueva York, Steve Cohen, planea construir un ostentoso casino a un lado de Citi Field en una superficie de más de doscientos mil metros cuadrados de áreas verdes, que representarían una gran pérdida para las futuras generaciones. La Ciudad de Nueva York necesita más zonas verdes para refrescar el espacio urbano de cara al cambio climático, y es nuestra responsabilidad protegerlas. Una vez que la tierra pierde su estatus oficial de parque y un enorme desarrollo urbano se construye sobre ella, esa área natural se ha perdido para siempre. JHBG se opone a este plan basado sólo en la enajenación de zonas verdes. Lee nuestra declaración completa en

jhb.org/2023/05/04/jhb-stand-on-parkland-alienation/

Sugerencias para la transformación del estacionamiento en Citi Field frente al programa anual Amaze Light Festival.



Ecosistemas

POR DAVE WATSON

Un ecosistema es una comunidad de organismos vivos (plantas, animales y microbios). Con el cultivo de plantas nativas, los jardineros pueden restaurar el hábitat que es vital para preservar la biodiversidad y ayudar, así, a crear ecosistemas. Quizás el aspecto más importante es la diversidad de vida que atraen las plantas nativas, como pájaros, abejas, orugas, mariposas, polillas y sus polinizadores. En Queens podemos empezar a promover la creación de más jardines para crear ecosistemas que incluyan plantas del noroeste, como avena, variedades de áster, hierbas de Joe Pye weed, falsos girasoles, diferentes tipos de varas de oro, algodoncillos comunes, flores de niebla azules y muchas más.

¡Sonríe para AI! Una instantánea de la historia del fotógrafo de Eisenhower, Al Freni, originario de Jackson Heights

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

Nacido en Jackson Heights un Día de Acción de Gracias, el 24 de noviembre de 1933, Alfred Freni dice, en broma, que eso lo convierte en un “verdadero pavo”. El primer contacto de

Freni con su carrera como fotógrafo ocurrió en una sala de cine, el Teatro Earle, ahora un área de comida en Diversity Plaza, donde sus padres lo dejaban en manos del personal mientras se iban a trabajar. La fotografía que lo dio a conocer fue aquella del presidente Eisenhower pescando con su nieto David, que Freni tomó el 16 de agosto de 1955 cuando era el fotógrafo oficial de verano de la Casa Blanca, antes de cumplir 22 años. Esto abrió la puerta a una carrera satisfactoria desplegada en varias publicaciones. En 1994 conoció a David Eisenhower—quien ha admirado su trabajo desde los diez años—en la Universidad Hofstra durante un evento. Freni no sólo ha documentado parte de la historia de la casa blanca, también ha fotografiado celebridades, eventos deportivos, desfiles y mucho más. Sus padres se mudaron de Manhattan a Jackson Heights hace 100 años; y ahora



Jerry Crisci, dueño de Armondo's.

él vive a dos cuadras de la casa donde nació y creció.

¡Eso es amore! La historia del restaurante italiano Armondo's

POR MELISSA ZAVALA

Ubicado en el **73-16 de Northern Boulevard**, Armondo's sirve simplemente “comunidad”. En fechas recientes celebró su Quincuagésimo Aniversario y fue homenajeado por el Ayuntamiento y la Asamblea del Estado. Sus dueños, Gennaro “Jerry” y Patricia Crisci, han sobrevivido a un incendio y una reubicación gracias a su dedicación a sus clientes. Jerry Crisci llegó a los Estados Unidos con su familia cuando era niño, en el último viaje del SS *Andrea Doria*. Fue el primero de su familia en ir a la universidad. Sin embargo, su profesión como maestro era mal pagada, así que, animado por su tío, compró el Armondo's original, situado en la esquina noroeste de la Calle 75 y la Avenida 37 en el edificio Bruson. Desde 1972, los Crisci han ofrecido un servicio amable y han hecho comunidad. Viaja a Italia en Jackson Heights esta temporada de celebraciones y disfruta de una buena comida y una cordialidad que levanta el ánimo.

Smile For AI!

A Snapshot of History from Eisenhower's Photographer and Jackson Heights Native, Al Freni

BY MELISSA ZAVALA



The celebrated photo of President Eisenhower and his grandson, David, proudly shared by JH photographer, Al Freni.

Born on Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1933, Alfred Freni jokingly says this makes him a “real turkey”. He’s far from that. A hard-working, talented, and successful photographer, Freni personifies Jackson Heights, the place where he was born and has always lived—except for the times he spent in the Air Force, photographing President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and traveling around the country for work with Time-Life, Inc. From the back row of the PS69 auditorium after arriving late to school on his first day of kindergarten, he has gone on to the front row of history, albeit from behind his camera lens.

A four-foot snowstorm on his birthday had his father shoveling the front of the family home on Polk Avenue (now 37th Avenue) so the doctor could arrive to



deliver him. Freni remembers a childhood in the neighborhood marked by strict rations and supply drives during World War II. His mother was employed as a seamstress operator making garments for the military while his father worked

as a barber, leaving Freni alone at times. “The Earle Theatre was like a babysitter,” he says of the movie house, now a food court in Diversity Plaza. The theater staff would let him in for free while his parents worked. His mother would find him there on her way home. Film, in its different forms, has played a special role in his life.

Freni’s father always emphasized hard work and learning a trade. So, when he wasn’t at The Earle, he was working for RC Photo on 72nd Street and Broadway, where he picked up film from the neighborhood candy stores to develop at the photo shop. Eventually, he helped develop film. While at PS69, he won the Shop Medal, moving on to the High School of Industrial Arts (now the HS for Art and Design, where the late Queens native and cultural icon, Tony Bennett,

Courtesy of Al Freni Photography© (bottom)

was also a student). He was voted most likely to succeed there, before joining the Air Force and taking a photograph of “Ike” and his grandson that would secure him a career in photography, a trade and an art that has been a constant in his life.

Press stories about Al Freni recount his first camera, a deluxe plastic box at the time costing him \$1.79. On one of his walks around the neighborhood with his camera, a stranger asked him if he knew the famous photographer who lived in the building across from where they stood. The stranger was referring to Alfred Eisenstaedt (featured in our Winter 2021 issue). Freni began saving his money and buying *Life* magazine issues to see Eisenstaedt’s work, walking by the building regularly, hoping to be discovered at age 10. The two later became friends, and Freni came to heed “Eisie’s” advice (the famous photographer’s work nickname): “As a photographer, first you take the pictures—then, you let them arrest you”. Freni has documented not just history in the making at the White House but has also photographed celebrities who know to *Smile for AI* when he is taking candid photos. He has documented sports events, parades, and much more. Some of the many personalities he has snapped include local figures like Rudy Giuliani, Ray Kelly, Michael Bloomberg, and Andrew Cuomo, as well as national politicians like the Clintons, and stars like Harry Belafonte and Yogi Berra, with whom he took a charming portrait he likes to share with neighbors who enjoy hearing about Freni’s interesting career.



Two of the legendary New Yorkers photographed by Freni, Harry Belafonte and Tony Bennett, both of whom passed away this year.

**“I was born here
[in Jackson Heights].
This is my town. I love it
and enjoy my life here.”**

His distinguishing photograph is one of President Eisenhower fishing with his grandson David, who is in a cowboy hat. Freni is truly proud of this photo. He discounts luck and insists on the skills acquired through hard work required to produce special shots like this one. He advises everyone to “go out in the rain, work when no one else wants to work” as a route to success. On a photo op for the press, President Eisenhower golfed, fished, and rode on horseback with his grandson. During the fishing portion, Freni stepped away to change the flashbulb and the intimate moment he had just captured

was gone. He had caught a shot that he describes as the “1/200th of a second that can change your life”. That photo, from August 16, 1955, was taken while he was the official Summer White House Photographer three months shy of his 22nd birthday. It opened the door to a satisfying career featured in several publications. In 1994, he was able to meet David Eisenhower at Hofstra University during an event. Freni recounts this meeting with joy and pride, repeating what Eisenhower said to him after welcoming him into the conference room where the meeting was in progress: “Mr. Freni, I’ve lived with this picture my entire life. I never knew who took it. It’s an honor and pleasure for me to meet you”. Honored as a veteran of the Air Force, as well as by Time-Life, Inc. Alumni Society for his numerous magazine covers, he relishes this meeting in special ways.

Asked what he finds most compelling about life in Jackson Heights, Freni says it is more than just convenience, though having both the airport and his office in the Time-Life building nearby were important for him. His parents moved here 100 years ago from Manhattan; he now lives two blocks from the home where he was born. He has lived through good times, when visitors to Hillcrest Court (70-35 Broadway) were welcomed by a receptionist, and hard times, when the neighborhood was called “the Cocaine Capital of the United States” and the garbage was piled high on the streets. He notes that people now buy apartments here for more than a million dollars to move from Manhattan to a neighborhood that is so multicultural, “you don’t have to go very far to learn about different people”. He adds, “I was born here. This is my town. I love it and enjoy my life here.”

**Two Italian Americans and military veterans,
Al Freni and Yankee All Star, Yogi Berra.**



Courtesy of Al Freni Photography © (3)

JACKSON HEIGHTS NOTABLES

Highlighting former Jackson Heights residents of notable interest for the ways in which they represent our neighborhood.

Dorian Leigh

One of the First Supermodels

BY DAN KARATZAS

Along with her kid sister, Suzy Parker, Dorian Leigh Parker was a top model. Best remembered for her “Fire and Ice” advertising campaign for Revlon, she lived a very long and interesting life, one atypical for a girl born in 1917.

Dorian, her parents, and her two eldest sisters moved from Texas to Jackson Heights by the early 1920s. While living here, her chemist father invented a new etching acid that made him wealthy. According to a May 2006 *Vanity Fair* article on the youngest (and most famous) sister, Suzy Parker (born in Jackson Heights in 1932), it was said that the formula for the acid was perfected in their Jackson Heights bathtub and bottled in their apartment.

In 1935, Dorian, like her two sisters, graduated from Newtown High School. Unlike most girls in her class, Dorian was off to college – Randolph-Macon Women’s College in Virginia. While in college, Dorian married the first of her five husbands. By 1944, there were two children and a divorce. Dorian ended up as a clerk and “tabulator” at a Manhattan department store. Her proficiency in tabulating radio program ratings resulted in her finally obtaining a college degree. She earned a B.S. in, of all things, mechanical engineering, from the Stevens Institute of Technology.

While in school, and with World War II raging, Dorian worked at



A captivating and savvy pioneer, Dorian Leigh, blazed professional trails for women in several sectors.

Bell Laboratories and Eastern Airlines. And by the time the GI's returned home in 1945, she had also tried her hand at modeling. While she was almost 30 and only about 5' 5", she had finally found her true calling. The June 1944 issue of *Harper's Bazaar* had Dorian on the cover. Over the course of the next decade, Dorian went from one success to another on both sides of the Atlantic, praised by photographers (Irving Penn, Cecil Beaton, and Richard Avedon) and fashion editors alike. She opened her own, albeit short-lived, modeling agency, married again, and went on to greater triumphs, including mentoring her younger sister Suzy into the modeling profession.

At the advanced age of 35 (remember, it was 1952) Dorian was tapped by Revlon for its “Fire and Ice” campaign. And it is for these Revlon lipstick and nail polish advertisements



she is likely best remembered. As her modeling career waned, Dorian's beauty and continuing allure resulted in many relationships and even more marriages. Probably her biggest scandal was having the child of the then-married 17th Marquis de Portago in 1955. His promise to marry her was never realized because he was killed in a racing accident two years later. It was rumored that Dorian was the inspiration for Truman Capote's character Holly Golightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, published in 1958.

Yet before her death in 2008 at the age of 91, Dorian stayed busy. Her activities included becoming head of her own modeling agency in France, a cordon bleu chef, a restaurateur, a born-again Christian, an early employee of Martha Stewart, and an author. She was a woman ahead of her time, with a long life full of many adventures, to say the least.

COMMUNING WITH CITY CRITTERS

A Dog Whisperer reports on the healing connection between people and pets.

Reunited and it Feels So Good!

BY GAIL SIEGEL

After long summers, some pets feel like exploring, wandering, slaughtering (birds, mice), and hiding. For this reason, implanting pets with chips is recommended. There is even an annual National Check the Chip Day on August 15, a day to take pets to vets to make sure ID chips work. The true value of the chip is that pets can't be lost, pets aren't bothered by them, and when they are brought to veterinarians, possibly pet stores, or shelters, all owner contact information is accessible.

Another inexpensive option that doesn't require others to find lost pets is a small tracking device called a tile tracker that pets wear to allow owners to find them. The least expensive and low-tech option for identifying owners is a basic tag purchased at Petco or similar large pet stores with machines for engraving owner contact information for pets to wear.

Flyers identifying lost pets often do the job of alerting neighbors to be on the lookout and help find missing pets and I'm happy to report some successes. Of the three current signs posted in the neighborhood at the time of this writing, I reached two out of three owners looking for missing animals to find out if they had gotten their pets back. A little dog named Penelope was found after three weeks but I don't know where she was or how she was found. A black and white cat was found when a neighbor opened his garage where the cat had gone three days earlier. The third poster with two missing cats listed a phone number



that went unanswered after two calls, without a voicemail option. Earlier in the year, a ferret and a parakeet were also recovered.

I think this is the best neighborhood because we have our park and open streets where many people are observant and willing to help reunite pets with their owners.

Barney's Ladies Shoes Sign Emerges

BY DAN KARATZAS



Long-time residents remember Barney's on 82nd Street, a beloved neighborhood shop.



It had been covered over by numerous signs over at least the last six decades. But not until the owner of the building at the southeast corner of 82nd Street and 37th Avenue decided to restore the façade and have his commercial tenants install Landmarks-approved signage, was it revealed. It was an enamel and neon sign for "Barney's Ladies Shoes",

which likely dated from the 1940s. This Jackson Heights Barney's seems to have lasted for about a decade. The owners eventually opened a branch in Hempstead in the early 1950s. That branch closed only five years later, and the Jackson Heights store may have lingered on for a few more years.

Luckily, in July, Jackson Heights resident Rolando Pujol spotted the

recently uncovered sign in a Facebook posting, and included it on his online Substack newsletter, *The Retrologist*, where readers can get "roadside Americana and nostalgia news roundups, special articles and profiles" along with photos from his archive, and "breaking news updates on historic places and additional photos and information" on the places he visits.

Pujol did a superb job uncovering the history of Barney's Ladies Shoes, and best of all, assisted in its being saved by Marc Pohanka's New York Sign Museum. This engaging story of local interest can be found here: rolandopujol.substack.com/p/hidden-no-longer-historic-shoe.

Our thanks to Rolando and Marc for saving a bit of Jackson Heights history.

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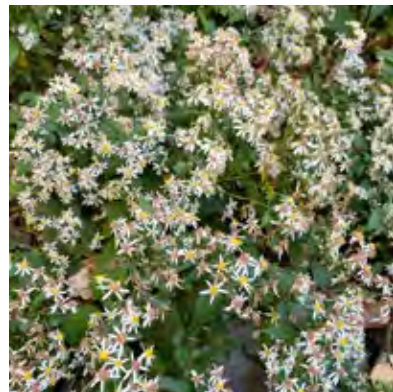
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Ecosystems

BY DAVE WATSON



Busiest in spring and summer, carpenter bees pollinate wildflowers like anise hyssop, and small and blue asters, featured here.



“Now, for the first time in its history, gardening has taken on a role that transcends the needs of the gardener.

Like it or not, gardeners have become important players in the management of our nation’s wildlife. It is now within the power of individual gardeners to do something that we all dream of doing: In this case, ‘make a difference.’

The ‘difference’ will be to the future of biodiversity to the native plants and animals to the native plants and animals (including insects and birds) of North America and the ecosystems that sustain them.” —Douglas Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home* (2007)

An ecosystem is a community of living organisms (plants, animals, and microbes). In contrast, non-native, exotic plants are still planted in many gardens. Such non-native plants are usually sold through laboratories and nursery cultivars. In addition, millions of miles of human development are spread over North America.

Now gardeners are becoming more interested in native plants. Audubon says: “Restoring native plant habitat is vital to preserving biodiversity. By creating a native plant garden, each patch of habitat becomes part of a collective effort to

nurture and sustain the living landscape”. In other words, gardeners can help build ecosystems.

Perhaps the most important and rewarding dividend is the diversity of life attracted to native plants such as birds, bees, caterpillars, butterflies, moths, and their pollinators.

We can begin to promote more gardens in Queens that can support ecosystems. These ecosystems could include plants from the Northeast such as sea oats, varieties of asters, Joe Pye weeds, false sunflowers, different types of goldenrods, common milkweed, blue mist-flowers, and many more.



That's Amore! Armondo's Italian Story

BY
MELISSA
ZAVALA



Photo by Jennifer Bernal Peralta



Food photos courtesy of Jerry Crisci (2)

Armondo's Italian classics continue to delight diners in a neighborhood rich in mouth-watering options.

Stories of migration are common in New York City, the home of Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Waves of immigrants from different parts of the world have made it a patchwork of ethnic enclaves, a virtual "gorgeous mosaic", as Mayor David Dinkins called it back in 1990. Every new group makes an impression on the city's culture, contributing bits to its overall identity. Sometimes, some become especially representative of the city's character. Such is the case of the Italian presence around the city, most obviously as its form of regional cuisine. NYC pizza is iconic, its quality unmatched throughout the country. Pop culture examples of pizza's importance over the decades are everywhere, establishing it almost as a character in different story plots, illustrating its popularity, from the favorite food of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to the pizza onesie worn by Katy Perry. And it's not just

pizza. Italian cuisine continues to enjoy much prestige in the culinary world. With fresh ingredients, diverse pastas, and its family-style dining format, community and place are central to it.

Armondo's Italian Restaurant, **73-16 Northern Boulevard**, serves just that: community. Having recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary, honored by the City Council and the State Assembly, its owners, Gennaro "Jerry" and Patricia Crisci, have survived a fire and a relocation thanks

to their dedication to their customers, and their staff and customers' loyalty to them.

Jerry Crisci arrived as a child with his family on the final trip made by the *SS Andrea Doria*. Like so many immigrants with dreams of better lives in the United States, he was the first of his family to attend a university, heading west to Colorado for that, also meeting his wife there. Raised in nearby Astoria, he returned to NYC trained as a teacher but facing low pay. He was encouraged by

his uncle, owner of Luigi's, a past neighborhood favorite on 37th Avenue and 84th Street (at the site now called Las Margaritas), to purchase the original Armondo's, named after its owner and situated on the northwest corner of 75th Street and 37th Avenue in the Bruson Building. The Criscis have been providing friendly service and community ever since, beginning in 1972. The immigrant story of arrival in a new land, overcoming discrimination with hard work, driven by creativity, cherishing community, and motivated by a sense of service and gratitude, are evident at Armondo's. The menu is rooted in Italian classics that blend with American favorites, and their hospitality towards friends and strangers alike is evident in their service. The restaurant's warmth makes it an ideal place to celebrate special occasions and community. Take a trip to Italy in Jackson Heights this Holiday Season and experience good food and friendly cheer!



Representative of Italian style, Vespas also symbolize great service to Crisci.



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VIEWS FROM THE HEIGHTS – Winter 2023

ONGOING EVENTS

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69th St. & 35th Ave.

For info on what is compostable,
contact info@JHBG.org

Most Saturdays, 10 am

Tree LC

Meets at the NE corner of
80th St. & 37th Ave.

Schedule may vary and include
some Sundays. Check the
[JHBG Facebook page](#)
for complete information.

Saturdays 10 am

Clean and Green

For complete details,
go to info@JHBG.org.

Daily

JH-CREW dog run

69th St. between 34th & 35th Aves.

To join, go to info@JHBG.org
for application. Suggested
donation, \$25/year.

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