FIRE ISLAND NEWS
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June 21, 2019

INSIDE:
Weddings on FI
Stonewall History
Dungeons & Drag Queens
Moses Failed Highway

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SOMETIMES THINGS GO WELL, and I will not play down how pleased I am right now. A few weeks ago, I was sitting at my desk wondering who might be a good person to interview for this issue. Next thing I know, a fellow named Greg Scarnici called me on the telephone. After speaking with him for only a few minutes, I knew the perfect candidate had been located. Social Media/Web Editor Anika Lanser was assigned the task, and what an interview it is!

Same thing happened while working with Managing Editor Lorna Luniewski. We were discussing possible subjects for our new Great Spaces column and Cherry Grove Community House and Theatre seemed a good idea. The story she delivered was not quite what was expected, and yet totally wonderful. Also read her article on the Historical Society of Islip Hamlet’s Oakwood Cemetery tour. She went, not on assignment, but because she took an interest in that event when preparing her calendar, and with Town of Islip’s 335th anniversary celebrations this summer – this too was a happy surprise.

Welcome aboard our new FIN reporter joining us mid-season, Rebecca Hoey. She also writes about Islip’s 335th in this issue, in a most timely fashion. The double helix continues as Book Review Columnist Rita Plush and Joey Macellaro both independently write of master planner Robert Moses in this issue. The two articles together give us a more complete ly write of master planner Robert Moses in this issue.

Things came together nicely this issue. Is this serendipity, just good luck, or dare I say, kismet? None of the above – we make our own luck. My job, in retrospect, was easy this time around. Sometimes it’s best to let the creative process run unharnessed to yield the best results.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR >>

To the Editor:
This coming July 4th weekend will mark the 43rd annual “Invasion of The Pines.” Each year over a hundred drag queens and thousands of spectators travel from Cherry Grove to The Pines by boat, reenacting that day in 1976 when a drag queen was denied entry to The Pines, with those in The Grove traveling by boat to protest. It has become part of the fabric and folklore of this community.

The other invasion I speak of also travels from Cherry Grove to The Pines. Here I speak of invasive plants. Traveling the boardwalk between the communities means seeing bamboo and other invasive and non-native plants choking out what should be growing there. Many residents plant ornamentals, non-natives that do nothing for the local environment; no bug or bird recognizes these alien species as food. Worse, they push out those species that are native. Whether invasive or ornamental, these non-natives break the local food web. Globally, we have lost 50 percent of our insects and song birds in the last 50 years, much due to habitat loss, with much of that from such disruptions.

Fire Island is a National Seashore. This barrier beach is a rare place on earth, with a unique habitat. Yet, here is a situation where we are watching what’s left of it degrade through inaction, and because frankly we are only now coming to see the dangers non-native flora and fauna have on native populations.

This is a plea then to Fire Island’s local communities, along with The National Parks Service, to work in concert, and relentlessly to restore Fire Island’s native biome so that we will have a Fire Island to pass on to future generations. As with “The Mainland,” we must ‘repel the invaders’ if we are to stave off the local extinctions which are sure to follow.

Marshall Brown, Executive Director & Co-Founder
Save the Great South Bay

Hi Shoshanna,
Saw you in town last week but you were in the middle of a conversation. I picked up Fire Island News moments later and saw Lauren Steven’s beautiful adult coloring page! Thank you for keeping Trangleball in mind.

I stopped selling two years ago but found a new manufacturer so I may get back in business next year. Again... thank you for all your help over the decades from the last millennium to this one!

See you soon,
Mark Miller
President, Trangleball®

Have something to say? Write us at editor@fireisland-news.com. Electronic submissions only, no paper letters please – 350 words or less advised. We reserve the right to edit, abridge, or not publish any letter as we see fit. Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are not necessarily those of Fire Island News.

CORRECTIONS:
On page 17 of our June 7, 2019 issue, the surname of Fire Island Water Taxi Manager Sean Carlin is misspelled as “Carland.” The online version of this article had been updated.

On page 49 of the same issue, “Two Southside Hospital Cardiac Surgeons Rated Among Top in New York,” a misidentified photo was used to illustrate the likeness of Dr. Harold Fernandez, Director of Cardiothoracic Surgery at Southside Hospital.

2019 INSTAGRAM CONTEST
Each week readers will be given an opportunity to showcase their favorite parts of Fire Island by following each issue’s theme and tagging us on Instagram.

This week’s winners — Beach Pets

Next Week’s Theme — Red, White and Blue
Tag us in your favorite red, white and blue photos.
Deadline for week two: July 1, 2019

Contest Rules:
1. Follow us on Instagram at @fireislandnews.
2. Use BOTH of the hashtags #fireislandnews and #RWBFI.
3. Post and tag us in your photo by the listed deadline.
4. Make sure your account is set to public so we can see your photos!
AROUND & ABOUT >>

What’s in a Street Sign?
Photos by Lorna Luniewski

📍 America’s Cup Road: Monell Avenue in Islip is so named because there were several residents, known as The Islip Crowd, who took part in the America’s Cup Races in the 1800s. Read about some of them on Page 37.

📍 Located at the intersection of Maple Street and Ocean Avenue, Islip.

📍 Located at the end of Maple Street, Islip.

Germ Circus
Photos by Lauren Chenault

THE CIRCUS CAME TO TOWN at Woodhull Elementary School, but it’s not what you might think. School Nurse Janet LaViolette doubled as ringmaster to make a one of a kind Health Awareness Day on Friday, June 6, to educate students and the public alike on good health and hygiene practices to keep those pesky germs, viruses, and bacteria in check!

📍 Now those are big ticks!
📍 Coming to terms with germs.
📍 Affirming feet show the steps to good health.
Fresh Produce

Photo Courtesy Town of Brookhaven

The Farmers Market at Brookhaven Town Hall is back every Thursday, from 2-6 p.m. through the month of October. In addition to selling fresh produce, the market will promote wine, flowers, seafood and other Long Island products and encourage people to visit farms and support their local growers. The market is sanctioned by the New York State Agriculture & Markets to encourage residents to buy Long Island fruits and vegetables and bring attention to the Town’s many farms and the produce grown right in the consumer’s backyard.

The Dress Makes the Man

Photos by Shoshanna McCollum

The Imperial Court of New York held their annual Drag Tag Sale in Cherry Grove on June 9. This is where the guys score those great duds to strut their stuff at the Invasion of Fire Island Pines! “We take our special talents and passions for fashion and performance artistry and employ them to raise money, awareness, and consciousness in support of direct services organizations that positively affect the LGBTQ community,” their website states, citing their ongoing support of HIV/AIDS services and research, as well as assistance to underprivileged youth and shelters.
Then and Now

Fire Island News
Editor Bea Garfield in front of the former Fire Island News headquarters on Dehnhoff Walk in Ocean Beach. The image cites the year 1982 on the back, as well as the name Ooana Trien. Ooana would have been a little girl back then, but she often spent time at her parents’ newspaper office. It is entirely possible she took a picture of her grandmother with one of the heavy old style reporter cameras. The encouraging expression on Bea’s face suggests that’s exactly what is happening. Today 471-472 Dehnhoff Walk has changed very little. These days it houses the office of Megan Wallace of Dana Wallace/realestateonfire-island.com, and the dress shop Hanalei & Kula’s. (Present day photo taken by Shoshanna McCollum)
INTERVIEW:
“Dungeons and Drag Queens”
Author Greg Scarnici
By Anika Lanser

FIN: And you’re currently in Cherry Grove?
Scarnici: Yes, Cherry Grove. I reside in Cherry Grove, and I’m a DJ over at The Pines, so I’m usually on the board in both communities.

FIN: At what point did you start conceptualizing this book about your adventures on Fire Island?
Scarnici: To be honest with you, I was just writing my second collection of humorous essays that were just about current things that are happening in my life. My first one was about my growing up gay in New York, and my first interesting experiences working with “Saturday Night Live.” Then, about halfway through the book, I realized that half of the stories were about Fire Island. So I was like, ‘You know something? Let me just take those out and make an entire book dedicated to Fire Island.’

FIN: Do you have a favorite adventure that you talk about in the book or do you have a favorite essay?
Scarnici: Well, the feedback I’m getting from many that read it is that they liked this essay called Muu-Muu Land, which was just about how I was hanging out with my friends one afternoon at home, and my friend came over with five polyester muumuus. We threw them over our bodies, and it completely transformed our day. We had one of the most amazing days on the island, just going to The Pines and The Grove wearing these muumuus. Everyone’s responding to it. It was just sort of like a magic moment happened here. You didn’t plan anything, and then by throwing on a $5 fucking muumuu an entire day is transformed into an amazing day.

FIN: What did you do that day that made it so amazing?
Scarnici: Yes, we walked over to the Meattrack, to The Pines. We went to tea over there, where we felt so amazing? Everyone’s responding to it. It was just sort of like a magic moment happened here. You didn’t plan anything, and then by throwing on a $5 fucking muumuu an entire day is transformed into an amazing day.

FIN: What did you do that day that made it so amazing?
Scarnici: Yes, we walked over to the Meattrack, to The Pines. We went to tea over there, where we felt a little bit of hesitation from the guys because we’re going here as a kid, it just opened my eyes to being subversive and satirizing pop culture. Instinctively, a large part of my comedy is based on what I’ve seen and experienced on Fire Island, as far as drag and drag, whereas in the past, you could never see a drag queen there except for on the Invasion on the Fourth of July.

FIN: Your collection talks about 25 seasons on Fire Island. Obviously, that’s a really long time. Can you speak a little bit about how Cherry Grove and The Pines have, maybe, changed over those years, and the differences you see in those communities over the course of the time that you’ve been coming to Fire Island?
Scarnici: One of my recurring jokes is that Cherry Grove never seems to change. It could be 2019 – it could be 1979, you would have no idea!! But the truth is the two towns are starting to become a lot more alike. There’s new housing in The Grove that resembles homes you’d see in The Pines. And The Pines, which used to not be as accepting of drag, now has drag brunches. It’s a lot more carefree and fun, which is what The Grove has always been.

FIN: So you sort of see the separation between The Pines and The Grove as shrinking?
Scarnici: I feel like, yes, the distinctions between the two towns is slowly fading away. The aesthetic of The Grove is starting to look a lot less cottage-y, and with much more beautiful homes with people putting money into upgrading their homes, catching up with the way The Pines looks. The Pines is catching up to an acceptance of people of all different types, with kids and presentation and drag, whereas in the past, you could never see a drag queen there except for on the Invasion on the Fourth of July.

FIN: That’s such an interesting thing to witness. How do you see the influence of Fire Island and link these experiences that you’re describing in your essays, as impacting who you’ve become?
Scarnici: Fire Island has been a huge influence on who I am creatively. Drag has just been a part of our culture here since the 1930s. Ever since I’ve started coming here as a kid, it just opened my eyes to being subversive and satirizing pop culture. Instinctively, a large part of my comedy is based on what I’ve seen and experienced on Fire Island, as far as drag and taking on our world, to comment on it and satirize it, sort of just fuck with the heteronormative world that we live in, but in a fun and comedic way, if that makes sense.

Scarnici as himself.

Scarnici’s alter ego Levonia Jenkins.

There have been many accounts of time spent on Fire Island, and in varying mediums. However, there is perhaps no account as hilarious or as honest as the collection of essays released this past March by Greg Scarnici. Titled “Dungeons and Drag Queens: Fire Island through the eyes of its worst drag queen,” the collection of essays explores the 25 seasons Scarnici has spent on Fire Island, detailing everything from drunken afternoons to how the island has changed through his eyes. Also an associate producer on “Saturday Night Live,” Scarnici recently sat down with the Fire Island News to talk about everything from his latest book to projects in their beginning stages to his take on the Grove.

Fire Island News: When did you first start coming to Fire Island?
Greg Scarnici: In 1990, I rented a house in Ocean Beach, which was the straight part of the island, with friends from college. That’s the first time I really fell in love with the island. During that trip, we took a little trip to Cherry Grove. Even though I was a closet gay at the time, I was very excited to come to Cherry Grove, where it was a super insanely gay community and it just completely opened up my eyes as to what an island paradise could be if you were gay.
SHOPPING AROUND

J&J Spirit Shop in Sayville has been family-owned and -operated since 1979. They offer a large selection of wines from Long Island, wines from around the world and an eclectic assortment of liquor. Delivery to Sayville Ferries is available. (Photo by Lorna Luniewski)

We like the spirit of this message! (Photo by Shoshanna McCollum)

Watching Cherry Grove go by on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. (Photo by Shoshanna McCollum)
THE KISMET COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION held its annual Spring Meeting on Sunday, June 2. Although budget estimates for the coming year are positive, there are still a significant number of homeowners who have not joined KCA. We were introduced to three new homeowners who have joined and were present: John, Robin, Jen, Joe and Scott in “Way Way Yonder;” Sidney and Frank Moss in John Altieri’s former home (John recently purchased the former ‘X Mayer’ home on East Lighthouse); and Hal and Nancy at 97 Pine.

Apparently, the port-a-potties in use last year may be missing this season, as the Kismet Fire Department’s lawyer will not be issuing an easement for positioning on their property. Sam reported the new lights on Maple and Burma are very popular and hopes to add some to the playground area, which is very dark at night. He expressed concern about a new “pedicab” operating between Kismet and Field 5.

While fully state and federally permitted, Kismet was never involved in the decision-making. While potentially useful to homeowners, it also might be useful to constitute any emergency on their property. Sam also said Kismetians and visitors needing the Courtesy Cart should continue to call his office.

Kismet is in need of new garbage cans and maintenance on the police hut. The Kismet Historical Society, now a 501(c)3 corporation, will host a fundraiser in September. Residents may bring photos, with captions and dates, for scanning by Long Island University, which has received a grant to digitalize materials in up to 80 local historical societies across Long Island. The Kismet Historical Society will be the fourth community on Fire Island to request these services, perhaps including living history interviews. The Kismet Fire Department Auxiliary (KFDA) reported plans for the upcoming Kismet Day on July 20. Block captains will be soliciting donations for the Super Raffle that was so popular last year. Anyone wishing to attend the CPR class on June 22, should contact Patty Lyon. Yoga and Pilates will continue at the Firehouse. There is now a 311 number for non-emergency police calls. Problems with the walks continue: Loose concrete on East Lighthouse before the over-walk and poor drainage on several streets. Elliot stated the new FINS superintendent will be holding four open house meetings in Saltaire and Ocean Beach. Kismet Association elections will be held at the fall meeting. Early nominations include Wendy Schou for secretary, as Chris Rosenblum is stepping down; and Marsha Hunter for president.

Sadly, we have learned that Lynn Goiella of “Camelot” passed away on June 3. She felt ill on the drive home from Kismet. Jerry Scheinman drove her to Metropolitan Hospital. She was later transferred to Bellevue where she succumbed. Lynn was a “Camelot” resident for a number of years. She won the 50-50 raffle at last year’s Kismet Day, and planned to donate a significant portion back to Kismet Fire Department. I will post memorial information after Madonna meets with her sister.

The weekend of June 7 was a big one for Kismet Fire Department members. Weekly weekend drills have been standard for five years or longer. Last Friday evening, the West End Mutual Aid group (Kismet, Saltaire and Fair Harbor) held a search and rescue drill at our old firehouse, which they “smoked up” to simulate a possible real-life situation.

“We try to make the simulation as close as possible to the real thing,” Gary L. told me. “Drills happen at night because that’s when most fires break out.”

Afterwards, dinner was served in the firehouse by KFDA members. It must have been an aromatic experience: Marge Fiore told me Mike was stinking with smoke. The Annual Installation Dinner was held Saturday night for members and guests. Dominic Bertucci continues as chief, Cody Baker as first assistant chief and Harry Guntis as second assistant chief. Buddy Schumacher is secretary and Linda Nowacheck is treasurer. Larry Cole received a 40-year service pin. (Unfortunately, my pictures of arriving guests and Belmont fans at Kismet Inn were accidentally deleted from my SD card — bad on me.)

There was also a memorial service for Gerry Field, Tommy and Jimmy’s mother, on the mainland. She and her husband, Dudley, were long-term year-round residents and very involved with KFD. Joann Scel-lato was visiting with Lauren for the service, and “to wiggle my toes in the sand.”

Riley Cole had a super birthday celebration with friends and relatives and, most exciting, a real bounce house. My apologies to Kai Sitone who I mistakenly tagged as Ian in my June 7 column’s picture of Kai with his Seabay pals, Lydon and Riley.

A shout out to Warren Boyd Wexler for his wonderful, heartfelt letter to the Fire Island News in the June 7 issue about the pending tragedy of deer “culling” on our island. There is still a court case pending and the Fire Island Wildlife Foundation is planning a rally and petition drive later in the summer. More updates to come.

The next events are CPR at the firehouse on June 22 and the Annual Burger Cookoff on the beach on June 29. Check out the picture of Mark N., happy consumer at last year’s Cookoff.

1. Laurie, Ken, Maureen, and Linda.
2. Kaitlin and Hudson Quenzer.
Point O’ Woods Lecture Highlights Moses’ Failed Highway

By Joey Macellaro

A STANDING-ROOM-ONLY crowd of more than 200 packed the casino in Point O’ Woods on the afternoon of June 8, for the annual Robert F. Sayre Memorial Lecture. Dunewood resident Jim Rosenthal presented a talk and slide presentation, sponsored by Point O’ Woods Historical Society, titled “Robert Moses’ 40-Year Quest to Build a Highway through Fire Island.” Attendees were treated to a reception following the talk.

Rosenthal began by discussing the rise to power of Robert Moses, the first president of the Long Island State Park Commission. Moses’ first major public project was the design and construction of Jones Beach, which opened in 1929, and could accommodate 25,000 cars. Among numerous other projects, the ever-ambitious Moses immediately began to plan an oceanside highway to connect Jones Beach to Smith Point Beach 38 miles to the east — much of which would bisect Fire Island and its communities.

Initially, Rosenthal noted, some residents were keen to the idea. Coulter Young, president of the Point O’ Woods Association, quickly offered to sell his property to the state and suggested others do the same. However, a majority of residents resisted the plan and the changes it would bring.

The stock market crash of 1929 occurred just two months after the opening of Jones Beach and hampered some of Moses’ building projects, but he countered by telling Fire Islanders that the highway, dubbed Ocean Parkway, could increase land value by as much as 600 percent. The parkway was built east to Gilgo State Park by 1934, where it stalled.

Rosenthal continued by noting that Moses took advantage of the devastation caused by the Hurricane of 1938 in an effort to move forward with the highway project. Moses suggested using the highway as a protective barrier against the ocean, calling for 35 million cubic yards of sand to be pumped onto the beach and the creation of a 200-foot-wide boat channel through the bay.

Rosenthal presented a letter written to The New York Times in 1938, by resident Elmer Davis, who asserted, “This is no mere reaction to the hurricane ... [Moses] would save Fire Island the way Hitler is saving the Sudeten lands.”

A facsimile was shown of a 1956 publication by the Department of the Interior, titled “Our Vanishing Shoreline,” which encouraged the preservation of natural beach habitats, and the Kennedy administration further championed environmental protection that contrasted with Moses’ plan to drastically alter Fire Island’s composition.

The Ash Wednesday nor’easter of 1962 prompted yet another push by Moses, but residents fought back harder than ever. Murray Barbash and Irving Like of Dunewood created the Citizens’ Committee for a Fire Island National Seashore and mounted a campaign to convince Congress to permanently protect the island from further development. Facing opposition from Governor Nelson Rockefeller and many constituents, Moses resigned from most of his state posts in 1963. The National Seashore was established in 1964 and the highway plan was finally put to rest.

The lecture closed with a statement made by Moses at the 1964 dedication of the causeway that would eventually bear his name: “The white heron nesting in numbers off the causeways and Ocean Parkway at Jones Beach in the shrubbery we planted are no more disturbed by passing cars than the lions in the game refuges in Tanganyika.”

A recording of the 1963 protest song “Slow Down Moses” by Julius Monk was played and copies of the lyrics were distributed.

Born on Dec. 18, 1888, the 130th anniversary of the birth of Robert Moses renewed interest in this controversial titan in New York history, as well as the organized resistance of Fire Island residents to stop him.

Rosenthal spent many summers with the residents who fought the highway plan, having first come to Dunewood in 1965. He is an award-winning magazine and newspaper journalist, a former producer for CBS and ABC, and a managing partner with the Mintz Group, an investigative services firm.

The Sayre lecture series is named for the late Dr. Robert F. Sayre, an English professor at the University of Iowa, who spent summers in Point O’ Woods beginning in 1934. The content of his first lecture for the Historical Society in 2012 was compiled into a book, and the lecture series has continued in his honor after his death in 2014.

The Civil Vote: Ocean Beach Race 2019

By Shoshanna McCollum

THERE WERE NO COURT ORDERS, subpoenas or drama — the general election of Village of Ocean Beach on June 7, 2019, was a civil and orderly affair. Final votes at the end of the night put Deputy Mayor Matthew Blake in for his second term with 233 votes, and former village trustee as challenger Steve Norris back for a second term with 233 votes, while incumbent Mayor James Mallott won with 334 votes over challenger Eric Einig, who had 275 votes.

Einig had not been on the ballot for three years, when he ran as a write-in candidate. He was not a clean slate candidate — his two prior village trustee terms from 2002 to 2010 won him both friends and enemies.

The people have spoken. Ocean Beach will continue with the same administration in place for three more years.

The people have spoken. Ocean Beach will continue with the same administration in place for three more years.

Standing room only at the Point O’Woods Casino.
ONCE THIS ISSUE HITS THE STREETS, the first thing you'll do is bend over and pick it up, since no true Saltairian ever litter the boardwalks; true Saltairians throw their litter in the bushes off the boardwalks. Anyway, when you pick it up it’ll be on sale, so grab hold of the approaching hullabaloo and enjoy it even as the Plutonian darkness slowly consumes our bright sunny days and converts them, piece by piece, into black, starry nights. Which are actually quite beautiful.

Well, “irregardless” (as a former Village administrator used to say and write with a frustrating “ir” before “regard” for English), what better way to mark the start of Saltaire’s seasonal busy-ness than with a message from Commodore Connie Lawler of the SYC? None, so here it is, unedited, unvarnished and uncompressed for time and commercials:

“For the first time ever in Saltaire and on Fire Island, I have made arrangements for a sanctioned ACBL Bridge Game where players can obtain master points. It will take place on Monday afternoons from July 8 through August 26 (eight weeks of bridge) at the Yacht Club. Since we are a private club, it will be for members and guests only and by invitation. The game will run from 2 p.m. until 5:15 p.m., and I have hired a Director from the ACBL to come to Saltaire. This is a fantastic deal for us as there has never been a bridge club on Fire Island and all of us will be able to participate in tournaments on the mainland and give our own tournament if we choose too. Hope you will advertise this in your Fire Island newspaper, and give us some good publicity so that other Saltaire members would like to join. Many thanks from your local bridge guru, Connie Lawler.”

Okay, first thing is, I lied. I did have to make a couple of tweaks to Connie’s message, but only those necessary to conform with the Fire Island News’s standards and practices: no words were de-stroyed in the reconversion of this paragraph, just squeezed together and reworked a bit. And while I thank Connie for her reference to “your Fire Island newspaper” it is of course not mine; I only work here, and barely holding on at that. In any case, we’ve played the cards we were dealt, bridged the gap between Connie’s prose and the requirements of modern journalism, and brought you oh my God I just drew aces and eights.

Incidentally, Commodore Connie is helming the Club toward another promising season, aided immeasurably by the board and staff (sounds like a Yorkshire pub, doesn’t it – the Board and Staff?). Already tennis camp is in full swing, sailing registration starts June 29 (first Landlubber race June 30), of course the restaurant with its superb cuisine and bar with its superb drinks have been open weekends and go all 7/6 from June 21. But wait – there’s more! Members check your calendars and watch for weekly Conniemails.

Memos! The Post Office opened in its dingy digs at 14 Bay on June 20. Remember the SCA’s annual members’ meeting at 11 a.m. Saturday, June 22, at the brand-spanking-new Village Hall, immediately following the spankings. Oh, the SVFC’s Ice Cream Social is Saturday, July 6, at 2 p.m.

Speaking of electronic messaging, V.A. Mario Posillico has been dispatching ever-more effervescent weekend updates for forthcoming events, even alerting us to the fact that as the office begins its relocation into said spanked Village Hall its communications would be spotty for a few days as phones and computers were removed and reinstalled at taxpayer expense. But he, Donna Lyudmer and (as the “Gilligan’s Island” theme initially put it) “the rest” were working hard to keep things humming amid the chaos. It’ll all be worth it when the move is made and they have an ADA elevator to hoist them to the second floor.

And about that second floor, it’s now official: the temporary HQ of the Village Court this summer will be in that upstairs conference room after all, the absence of an alternate exit notwithstanding. Turns out that should our Village Justice (name withheld to preserve his personal security) provoke one of the miscreants hauled before him into uncontrolled violence, His Honor will indeed have either to jump out the window or install a judge-roppe by which he can shimmy down the drainpipe and escape via Pomander, though that street offers little natural shelter and he’ll have to rely on passing pedestrians to serve as human shields. Of course, this isn’t the kind of rope the unnamed Justice Frank Markus of 300 West Walk is used to dangling before his clientele, and he’s certainly not a second-story man, but it’ll do until we get him safely installed in his brand-spanking-new courtroom at next year’s 14 Bay. With a high-altitude escape pod at the ready, that’s when the spankings will really begin.
Community

GROWING UP, I knew just about everyone on our suburban block. There were backyard barbecues and chats in the street and baskets of cookies shared during the holidays. Everyone celebrated milestones together, watched each other’s children grow, and welcomed new families into the community. I wouldn’t have wanted to spend my childhood anywhere other than that little tree-lined block.

The years have passed and times have changed, but a sense of community remains in many places, including our own little spot on the beach. One can’t go far without a wave or a friendly hello from neighbors and friends.

We take care of each other, too. When two bikes were stolen from the Protestant church by some rowdy visitors a few weeks ago, they were promptly searched down and returned. Peter Wade of Ocean Bay Park recognized one of the bikes from a photo and was nice enough to retrieve it from the beach and drop it at the firehouse for safekeeping.

We also enjoy celebrating together. The annual Fourth of July baby parade will be held on Thursday, July 4, beginning at 11 a.m. Families are welcome to decorate wagons for the occasion and begin lining up at 10 a.m. on Midway in front of the firehouse. Members of the Ocean Beach Community Fund will assign numbers and review all participants after the parade has made its way into town. For a 28th year, the Bay Shore Fire Department marching band will lead the marchers, joined by our own uniformed officers. As per tradition, a patriotic home decorating contest also will be held, with winners announced later in the day.

“This is my 49th year doing the parade,” said Community Fund Honorary Chairman John Schaffner, “and with God’s help I will do my 50th.” After the parade, the Ocean Beach Fire Department will be hosting a cook-out on the ball field starting at 1 p.m. Food and refreshments will be available for a small fee.

The parade is only one of the Community Fund’s many programs and events. The Fund will be sponsoring the Village of Ocean Beach Environmental Commission’s annual Awareness Day event on Sunday, June 23, beginning at 12:30 p.m. at the Community House. Speaker Sean Barrett will be discussing the benefits of kelp and oyster farming, and the negative effects of nitrogen on the Great South Bay. Sugar kelp dishes will be served by local restaurants. The event is free of charge. Also save the date for a free movie night at the Community House on the evening of Friday, July 5.

The Ocean Beach Historical Society is jointly supported by the Community Fund and the Village of Ocean Beach and maintains a gallery at the Community house. This year’s first exhibit opens Saturday, June 29, and features a reprisal of last year’s showing of artist Kenny Goodman’s sculptures and jewelry. The Society gallery is generally open every Thursday through Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 7 to 10 p.m. Curator Linna Salamone tells us a special collaborative show is planned for August highlighting the oldest homes in Ocean Beach.

The Ocean Beach Association, another vital part of our community, is holding its summer membership meeting at the Community House on Saturday, June 22, at 11 a.m. Members may pick up their village directory, and all attendees will hear updates from local officials. OBA President Maria Silsdorf reports that the organization published 27 newsletters for members last year.

“We have advocated for you on many issues,” said Silsdorf, “represented your concerns at village meetings, and keep your concerns in the forefront.” The OBA may be contacted by email at oceanbeachassociation@gmail.com.

A flea market will be held on Saturday, June 22, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., on the ball field. Organizers Gail Stammer and Blair Burke stated that gently used items and bake sale donations would be greatly appreciated at the event, which has a rain date of June 23. Proceeds will benefit the Ocean Beach Fire Department.

Sean and Lindsey Klentzin, owners of Ocean Beach businesses including FiveEightThree, Bambootique, and Fire Island Outfitters, will be sponsoring an Awareness Fundraiser at the Island Mermaid tonight, Friday, June 21, at 9 p.m., with the theme Gay Rights are Human Rights. A $20 donation covers the cost of a drink and access to live music and DJ entertainment. Proceeds will benefit Pride for Youth.

Sean and Lindsey are public relations director and secretary, respectively, of the Ocean Beach Chamber of Commerce, and told us to encourage readers to follow @visitoceaneach on Instagram for information on events and promotions at our local businesses.

Matthew’s Seafood House is hosting a BayBash event every Sunday, from 3 to 6 p.m., featuring 95 cent buffalo wings, raw clams, and peel-and-eat shrimp. Matthew’s is currently in its 46th season of ownership by the Morano family. Emmy-winning television director Reed Morano’s stepfather, Matthew, and uncle, Casey Morano, established the business.

Joyce Rideout reminded me to mention that Brady Tannehill, daughter of Helen from Dockside Pizza, graduated from Hunter College on May 29, with a degree in mental health counseling. Congratulations to Brady and all the graduates previously mentioned. The last day of the year at the Woodhull School will be Tuesday, June 25.

Village Trustees Brian Power and Christopher Norris won reelection on June 7. The next village board meeting will be held Saturday, July 13, when the general session will begin at 11:15 a.m., at the ferry terminal boathouse.

Our community recently bid farewell to Evelyn Whitney, who faithfully ran Whitney’s Market for many years. The business is now known as The Pantry. We send our condolences to her family, including her daughter, Janice, whose smile and kind words have meant much to me over the years. Evelyn was 80 years of age and had retired to Longwood, Florida.

As the busy season begins and we welcome guests to the docks, may we all be thankful for the strong sense of community we enjoy here. I hope to see you soon on the beach.

1. Residents cast their votes at the Community House on June 7.
2. A broken fire hydrant caused a flash flood on Ocean Road on June 11. (Courtesy of Lauren Chenaught)
3. The Free Union Church has entered its 104th summer season.
Ocean Beach Board of Trustees Meeting
6/15/19

By Emma Boskovski

THE OCEAN BEACH Board of Trustees met at 11:15 a.m. on Saturday, June 15, for the incorporated village’s monthly board meeting, at the ferry terminal. The agenda was comprised of 18 items, running the course of the meeting to an hour and 20 minutes in length.

Agenda items included: set a public hearing date pursuant to NYS eminent domain procedure law, set a public hearing date for building moratorium on house construction, authorization to amend building department fine fee for certificate of occupancy, authorization and approval to purchase generator equipment for ferry terminal.

During the Mayor’s Report, a dialogue began between citizens and the board about the chaos of wagon traffic. Trustee Christopher F. Norris describes the issue as the “bane of Ocean Beach.”

“My offer still stands,” said Mayor James Mallott. “I have proposed the same solution for this problem in the past; we buy 300 wagons … one size … we place them in the village without chains. They would be village wagons: if you need a wagon, take a wagon.”

Moving along to the police report, Officer Andy Becher reported multiple statistics regarding the Memorial Day foot traffic that stormed the island for the holiday – 85 summonses were issued, 55 calls were received, there were 138 responses and six arrests. Becher also said that there was damage done to one of the village’s holding cells, and that repairs are anticipated.

“The nature of calls we received over Memorial Day Weekend ranged from A to Z,” said Becher.

Becher’s police report prompted an audience member to pose the question, “How many of the issued summonses were noise complaints?”

“The next question was asked by the same audience member: ‘How many were issued to bars?’

“We did not have any noise summonses issued to bars,” said Becher.

“We had 10 noise summonses issued to groups and houses on Memorial Day Weekend. We try and handle situations based on the manpower we have. With Memorial Day Weekend, as crazy as it was, it takes officers off the street. We don’t have enough people to go around and sit around the bars to ensure we receive no noise complaints.”

On June 22, the lifeguards will resume their full-time summer schedule. Sydney Leone announced during the lifeguard report. Leone also mentioned that two new lifeguard stands were purchased for the village and will be placed on Bayberry and Bungalow walks.

“They will be going up at some point in the next two weeks,” said Leone. “The new stands are higher than the old ones. We will have a better vantage point using the new stands and it will help us to see over the umbrellas.”

A motion was approved to continue the lease with the Fire Island Water Taxi, LLC Rider B, under a new two-year deal that was recently negotiated for $37,500 the first year and $40,000 for the second year.

“We are moving on with the ferry company negotiations and we wanted to give the water taxi an opportunity to also continue negotiations with them,” said Mallott.

A motion was approved next to set a public hearing date on July 13, at 11:30 a.m., in regard to the NYS eminent domain procedure law. This motion was passed for the purposes of expanding public walkways and the acquisition of certain properties.

“We are in contract with Tyler Sterk and negotiations began because we were redoing the ferry terminal. In negotiations, each party was satisfied. The north wall of his property is now village property. He has placed bicycles along this wall. Although paperwork has been signed, for some reason, Mr. Sterk has pushed us too far in claiming that this was part of our deal.”

During this public hearing, the village seeks to acquire the property from Sterk for village use, after consultation from the village attorney, because it is a safety hazard that doesn’t comply with the initial deal.

“We worked for three years to come to a fair resolution with Mr. Sterk, and until, and unless, he provides us a safe passage for travelers to get on and off of the ferry, we will have to proceed. The downside is that we don’t want to do this [acquisition]” said Trustee Brain Power.

Another hearing date was scheduled and approved in the next motion also on July 13, at 11:30 a.m., for a building moratorium on house construction for homeowners that seek to renovate what exceeds a threshold of 40 percent, otherwise major renovation of their property.

“This moratorium will give the village an opportunity to evaluate village code and maybe make some changes,” said Village Attorney Ken Grei.

According to Mallott, anything that can reduce the footprint of the building lot will be brought into consideration at the moratorium. The village is most concerned with fire and safety of major renovations.

The last three items on the agenda were motioned to be passed by the board and they all approved authorizations.

The motion to amend building fees for certificate of occupancy was passed to raise the fee 50 percent, from $100 to $150.

“The paperwork is just getting to be extraordinary in regard to construction,” said Mallott.

$69,650 was authorized to be spent on finishing the $10 million project that is the second phase of the sewage plant project, carried out by D&B Engineers and Architects. The project has been extended by four months.

The final authorization of the meeting approved the purchase of a generator for the newly renovated ferry terminal. It is a $40,000 cost that would provide a third generator for the village.

“The generator would be held off-site on a trailer and will be moved when needed,” said Mallott. “This way we avoid any electrical issues that may arise because of flooding and our live sprinkler system that we have here.”

The generator will be plugged into the freight house when needed.
I GOT UP EARLY ON SATURDAY so I could catch the kids’ softball game and found only the coach es, Huron Street’s Chas Kingsley and Crescent Street’s Jim Aug, discussing the upcoming season. Where was everyone? At first I thought I was late, and asked them what time the game started since I obviously hadn’t “read the memo.” They explained to me that the softball season officially starts July 4 weekend, when school is finally over and there are more kids around. Despite this, there were a handful of kids, including Taylor Kingsley and Zander Lustig among them Joan Rubenstein, Ellie Mal and especially Rachelle King. We’re not getting older, we’re getting better. Right before the race, Point O’Woods presented a lecture on Robert Moses and his efforts to build a highway through Fire Island. There was such a big turnout, it was standing room only. The lecture was followed by a wine and cheese reception. Lynn van de Water told me about his own brush with the master builder, Moses, when his family almost lost their house on Meadow Island in Swift Creek when the Meadowbrook Bridge was built to access Point Lookout. The Ocean Bay Park Association has decided that we cannot continue to wait for The Town of Brookhaven to provide us with street clearing service and has hired Beachcomber to sweep the streets. Ever since Winston Churchill is her most admired historical figure.

I’m a firm believer that we are all more free.” Americans are treated as equal, no matter who they are or whom they love, we are all more free.”

On my way home Don and Joanne Madeco went racing by. They were running so fast I did not get to ask them if they were training for the 5K Run for Rose this August. It was also Belmont Stakes day, the run for the roses, so maybe they were.

There was no Triple Crown this year. There were three pools and the big winners were Mike Supple, back to his winning ways; Fran Miller, doing her happy dance; and Tresa Pollack. The fact that the winning horse was named Sir Winston made it even more special for Tresa since Winston Churchill is her most admired historical figure.

By the time this issue is published we will have celebrated Father’s Day so I want to thank all the fathers, past and present, for all you do. I’d also like to wish all my fellow Geminis a very happy birthday, among them Joan Rubenstein, Ellie Mal and especially Rachelle King. We’re not getting older, we’re getting better!

The OBPFD Independence Day BBQ.

In honor of Gay Pride Month, I’d like to end with a quote from President Barack Obama: “When all Americans are treated as equal, no matter who they are or whom they love, we are all more free.”
Cherry Grove Community House and Theatre Boasts a Rich History

IN 2013, Cherry Grove Community House and Theatre was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but its history began much earlier than that. On a recent Tuesday I was lucky enough to tour the Theatre with two notable Cherry Grove residents, Thom Hansen, president, Arts Project Cherry Grove; and Robert Levine, a writer with this publication and one of the longest members of the Arts Project and the longest running performer at this historic place.

At a time when there was no electric, no water and no phones on the island, it became the “center of civilization,” said Hansen. “It was where people gathered and got together for their meetings, and then of course they started putting on shows as fundraisers. So it not only became a gathering place it became an entertainment place.”

“There was no other place in Cherry Grove to go to a show,” Levine said. “So this was the place. We used to have three shows a night, sold out, and three shows a season that were all by the Arts Project, and now there is so much competition that it’s harder to fill a house for three performances.”

Hansen and Levine went on to say that at one point they did six performances on Labor Day and Fourth of July weekends, and they would almost all sell out. “Those days are gone,” Hansen said. “Times are changing a little bit. Now what we have are single shows with one or two performances and sell them out, so we are still very successful, it’s just a different world than it was.”

The historical landmark plate affixed to the Cherry Grove Community House and Theatre entrance, which reads “As listed on the NYS Historic Register... The oldest continuously operating gay theatre in the U.S.” (Photo by Shoshanna McCollum)

The Theatre today. (Courtesy of Susan Kravit)

Thom Hansen and Robert Levine.

The historic register status came through because of the Arts Project, Hansen explained. While the building is part of it through the Cherry Grove Property Owners Association and the CGCAL, it was the Arts Project that brought all the theater here and brought the people together. “That is how we got the designation as the oldest LGBTQ continuous Theatre in the United States,” Hansen said. “They probably did it in the sand in 1946 and 1947, but in 1948 the building was here.”

Many famous people have graced this stage, and Levine remembers many of them. “Martha Raye, Arlene Francis, Hermoine Gingold ... Earl Blackwell (who founded the Arts Project with Mrs. Helen Ely and was famous for his best and worst dressed lists),” he said. “At a time when there were a lot of men in the town, having a woman on the board, a ‘Mrs.,’ gave the community a different cache ... she was a very important person out here.”

It was a very different time for the LGBTQ community. “It was really a place where people came to be themselves, safely, not having to worry about people finding them out or firing them, although there were problems,” Hansen explained. “Their names were in the paper if there was a raid,” Levine said. “There were raids on the Meatrack, and men who had wonderful jobs were arrested and their names were in The New York Times and they were fired, and so on.”

Although known as a gay community, there were many families who were a part of Cherry Grove. They took part in everything, and were never separated in any way. There were residents who were attorneys who represented “the boys” for free if they were arrested, Hansen explained. And other community members who would post bail, Levine added.

“The point being is that we are a community, a whole community, regardless of sexual orientation,” Hansen said. “Cherry Grove is a very united place for the most part, and always has been. That’s why this Theatre has lasted.”

Controversies, of course, existed over the years, as tastes changed, and some of the older people weren’t as open to change. One performer would have two sets of lyrics for his numbers. One he would perform in dress rehearsal for Mrs. Ely and the board, and one he used on stage. Hansen and Levine mentioned that what was considered unacceptable language at the time is now laughable, as today performers can say anything.

The Theatre stage is the original one, with updated curtains, fly system and electric, but part of the paneling was kept during the more than $1 million renovation it underwent a few years ago. Amazingly, a bulk of the money was raised through community fundraisers. An addition was added, which includes a conference room and new restrooms, along with a rooftop deck where the annual fireworks show can be observed on June 22.

The prosenium was built by Howard Seeley, who incorporated memorabilia from the shows and from individuals to create it, such as a broach of Mrs. Ely’s. A framed drawing details the artists, items and shows that are included. A signed original rainbow flag by Gilbert Baker (1951-2017) also adorns the wall. On June 23, at 1 p.m., excerpts from “Rainbow Warrior,” Baker’s memoirs, will be read.

The prosenium.

Every person who has performed at the Theatre has signed the wall in the dressing rooms, and it’s a virtual who’s who of performers, including Debbie Reynolds, who was here in 2015; Thom “Panzi” Hansen; and Robert “Rose” Levine. Rose will perform her annual show on July 6 (see our calendar of events for more information).

As it was in the past, The Cherry Grove Community House and Theatre is still very much the center of the community. In addition to the shows, Episcopal church services are held here; an opera discussion group, Al-Anon, bingo and Jazz-a-Size meet weekly; and the Fire Island Artist Residency has grown each year. It also is where many of the town’s fundraisers are held.

While touring the Theatre and hearing some of the stories first-hand was a special treat, the feeling that resonated the most was what a safe haven Cherry Grove Community House and Theatre was, and how, after all these years later, although times are different, it continues to be a place where everyone can be themselves.

Hansen summed it up beautifully, “It’s a joyous place.”
Trash, Recycling, Treasure Hunting

THE WEEKEND OF JUNE 8 AND 9 was a weekend of recycling collectibles and treasure hunting in Cherry Grove. We had a major clean up day on Saturday June 8, with a barge that left the Grove loaded with bulk household refuse. We had two deck sales that had fabulous treasures that never left the island. We also had our annual Drag Tag Sale that was as big as Barney’s Warehouse, courtesy of The Imperial Court of New York. The place was loaded with dresses, shoes, and wigs and accessories. The traffic was light, but there were enough serious shoppers getting their outfits for the Invasion. This merchandise came from some very important retailers, only to be sold for a song.

On Friday night, June 7, the Dune Fund held their second annual silent auction, in partnership with the Artist Tour of Cherry Grove, at the Community House, to benefit the preservation of our dunes, as the Dune Fund has done for more than 55 years. Many artists who participated in the 6th Annual Artist Tour of Cherry Grove donated artwork towards the silent auction to help the cause. Susan Ann Thornton, founder of the Artist Tour, was one of the artists participating; others included W. Douglas Topper, Lorraine Michels, John Mansueto, Mark Atten, Rosanna Chinchilla, as well as videographer George Lyter, who showed us some interesting pop up films on his projector at the Community House. It was a great time, and the artists are already planning for next year.

Billy Bean is the first “out” major league baseball player. He was with the Detroit Tigers, Los Angeles Dodgers, and San Diego Padres. He and his husband, Greg Baker, recently bought a house on the bay. They had guests from Miami Beach.

Uzi Parnes and Scott Richard enjoyed having Scott’s mother, Mary Richard, as their weekend guest from Walnut Creek, California. It was her first time to the Grove, but it certainly won’t be her last. She was thrilled to be here.

Jan Felshin and Edrie Ferdun are celebrating 60 years together. A fantastic party was given in their honor at “Heaven N’ Earth,” hosted by many friends. Guests came from nearby, such as Cherry Grove and Fire Island Pines, but also from the Hamptons; Rehoboth Beach, Delaware; Arizona; Maine; London; and New York. It was a real celebration with lots of dancing – even a conga line.

Our own Greg Scarnici (a.k.a. Levonia Jenkins) had a very successful book signing for his recent book “Dungeons and Drag Queens, Fire Island through the eyes of its worst drag queen,” a book most surely destined to become another Fire Island classic.

“The View” has been celebrating Gay Pride Month. Every day they have been featuring another gay icon. One of them was Jose Sarria. In 1962, Jose ran, as the first openly gay man, for City Council in San Francisco. In 1965, he founded The Imperial Court, which grew into a national organization, then into Canada and Mexico as well. Jose died five years ago, but he would spend every summer in Cherry Grove for at least two decades prior to his death. He was the frequent guest of the late Billie Ann Miller and Thom (Panzi) Hansen. He was lovingly known as “Mama.” We spent many, many times together.

Another Grove neighbor, Wanda Sykes, was also a guest on “The View.” She spoke about her upcoming role as the iconic Louise Jefferson in the remake of the “The Jefferson’s” with Jamie Foxx (which aired live, on May 22).

Of course the late Gilbert Baker, who designed the world famous rainbow flag, stayed in Cherry Grove during his later years. “The View” recently had a segment dedicated to him as well, showing a photo of him at the White House with President Obama. Join the discussion on June 23, at 1 p.m., at the Community House, to honor Gilbert Baker. A reading of his posthumously released book, “Rainbow Warrior,” will be held. Copies of the book will also be for sale, as Cherry Grove will one of the official stops of the title’s book tour throughout the United States.

The flagpoles and the benches have been installed on the new dock as promised. Celebrate Gay Pride in the Grove, as well as the 50th Anniversary of Stonewall, on Saturday, June 22. Cherry Grove’s Parade begins in town at 2 p.m., with a dance at the Community House at 8 p.m., followed by fireworks by the bay at 9:30 p.m.

Todd Joseph and Eddie Fraser presented “Lady Gay,” at the Community House on June 15, featuring a command performance by William Bailey (a.k.a. Jada Valenciaga) opening the show in a beautiful red dress and performing as a perfect Billie Holiday. William then came back on stage as himself, and was just brilliant. He had a four-piece band and three backup singers. The entire evening was a benefit for the Northwell Clinic. Bob Dixon was a major donor. Northwell is offering a free skin cancer screening, on June 28, at their Cherry Grove office, by appointment only. Call Lisa at 631-396-6705. A second screening will take place in August.

Italy comes to Cherry Grove as CGCAI holds their Italian Street Fair fundraiser, on July 6, from 4-7 p.m. The costume contest theme is Come as your Favorite Italian. Also authentic food, wine, drinks, and a canno-li contest. After this party, come dressed as you are to the Community House to see Rose Levine in “I Gotta Be Me,” on July 6, at 8:30 p.m., with Chris Bell, director, and Mark York as musical director.

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On Sunday, July 7, the 23rd annual Cherry Grove Garden Tour will be held from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. A ticket sale table will be set up in town earlier that morning. Tickets are $20, with a reception to follow. Also July 7, Bell Bottoms is the theme for bingo at the Community House at 7 p.m., with new Host Bobby Michel.

1. Scott Richards with his mother, Mary, and his partner, Uzi Parnes.
2. Susan Ann Thornton and Nancy Adams at the Artist Tour of Cherry Grove Silent Auction, benefiting the Dune Fund.
3. Happy 60th Anniversary Jan Felshin and Edrie Ferdun.
LINDA GOTTLIEB did it once again. She organized the 9th Annual Women’s Pride in the Pines, a fundraiser for The Ali Forney Center. Each year this event gets bigger and stronger.

The dance was held at Whyte Hall, which was great fun with many guests, all dressed in white, dancing to the melodic sounds of Sue Levine’s excellent spinning. There was an open bar. Many gifts were donated for the silent auction. Everything was on point.

Comedian/actress Judy Gold is no stranger to the gay community. She appeared in Cherry Grove last season. She took the stage and was received with a Pines welcome. Joi Caldwell, a singer, followed with lots of enthusiasm and excitement. She had the audience dancing. Billy Porter, who was the guest entertainer two years ago, was a featured guest on “The View” last week, as part of their Gay Pride Month celebration.

The Ali Forney Center, the recipient of this fundraiser, is located in New York City. It is the largest organization of its kind and is dedicated to helping thousands of LGBTQ youths in the United States between 16 and 24 years old, providing housing, food, clothing and medical care. We thank Linda for her leadership in raising money for this important cause over the years.

Alana Berger, who lived in the Pines for 30 years, recently moved to Ft. Lauderdale. She spent a week in the Pines as Linda Gottlieb’s guest, and would not think of missing the Women’s Pride Party. Scott Reidel and Gil Neary are spending a week in Ireland with Gil’s brother, sister-in-law and their six children. Henry Robin and Bob McGarity are on a cruise to Iceland, Norway and points cooler.

Pines resident Jeff Mahshie, a past Tony nominee for his costume design in “She Loves Me,” is now costume designer for the Broadway revival of “Kiss Me Kate.” Bobby Michel, a Pines resident who lived in the Grove before he bought his Pines house, loves to attend the Arts Project of Cherry Grove events. He graciously agreed to host Bingo every Sunday at the Community House. The first bingo game, with the theme Bell Bottoms, begins on July 7, at 7 p.m., and will continue most every Sunday through mid-August.

The Tony Awards were wonderful on Sunday night, June 8. Our Fire Island News NYC Theatre Critic Leonard Feigenblatt made his predictions of the winners in the last issue, which came out before the show on Sunday. His predictions were almost entirely correct. Wes Pope, who lives in the Grove, is a dresser with “The Cher Show.” He is busy working this summer, but he will be here for the Invasion with his partner, Richie Mastics. They will perform as they have for the past 10 years in the opening number at the Invasion in the Pines.

Hal Hayes returned from Las Vegas, where he attended and spoke at a seminar for the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He also attended the opening night Gala of the Alvin Ailey Dance group at Lincoln Center. They will be one of the featured dance groups at DRA Fire Island Dance Festival in the Pines, on July 20 and 21.

The theme for the Pines Party this year is Island of Lost Boys. Save the dates on the weekend of July 26-28. Major companies have already donated large sums of money as sponsors for the event including Northwell, Fire Island Water Taxi, and many others.

The outdoor lighting at Whyte Hall is being converted to LED lights. They also will convert the interior lighting of Whyte Hall to LED lighting by next summer. The doctor’s living quarters will be converted as well.

This year, in honor of the 50th Anniversary of Stonewall, the preshow at the Invasion will be a little more spectacular with more entertainers, surprises and great fun. Get there early and get a good spot.

On July 6, Rose Levine will appear in “I Gotta Be Me” at the Cherry Grove Community House, at 8:30 p.m., with Chris Bell as director, and Mark York as musical director. Tickets are available at artsprojectcg.org.
Fire Island Wedding Guide: The Destination Close to Home

By Laura Schmidt

JUNE IS WEDDING MONTH, and getting engaged is one of the most exciting moments in a couple’s journey. However, planning the dream wedding can be rather stressful. They must find the perfect rings, know where the ceremony and reception will be held, what kind of food to serve and where their guests will stay, among other specific tasks. Thankfully, Fire Island is filled with businesses that are committed to making your wedding experience run as smoothly as possible, and South Shore stores are available to help along the way.

The Reception

Maguire’s in Ocean Beach can be your full-service wedding venue. Operating for 24 years, Maguire’s has hosted close to 100 weddings and does so with great care. Their beautiful bayfront deck offers unobstructed views of the sunset for a picture perfect evening. With a capacity of up to 200 people, Maguire’s offers various passed hors d’oeuvres, display stations, buffet style (including a clambake dinner), and full course banquet style dinners (full menus can be found on Maguire’s website). The evening includes top shelf spirits, beer, wine by the glass and nonalcoholic drinks. Couples also have the option to pay extra for premium, cordial, frozen drink or a “kiddie” bar. Owners Jim Betz, general manager, and Drew Becker, executive chef, will help with every step of the process to ensure your wedding day is an event everyone will remember. For more information, call 631-583-8800.

Hurricane’s Bar and Grill in Ocean Bay Park can accommodate up to 300 people under a tent just steps away from the beach. The on-premises chef and event planner, Melissa, will work with couples to plan the event and make the day as easygoing as possible. Hurricane’s five-hour reception package offers a cocktail reception, customizable menus and a top shelf bar. With a full catering staff and menu, guests can enjoy passed or stationed hors d’oeuvres, buffet stations or sit-down dinner service followed by delectable desserts. A welcome barbeque is included as well as brunch the next morning. Attached to the Fire Island Hotel, guests can feel at ease knowing their room is right around the corner. For more information, call 631-583-8000.

Of course for waterfront receptions, The Hideaway offers a secluded garden location that is second to none (631-583-5929). Island Mermaid’s private marina is just one of many features that makes it appealing (631-583-8088), and Matthew’s Seafood House still has the vibe of Fire Island from a bygone era (631-583-8016). Of course for that post reception cocktail, a Rocket Fuel at CJ’s is an absolute must to make it an authentic Fire Island wedding.

The Palms Hotel offers a truly unique experience for couples and guests getting ready for the wedding. General Manager Laura Mercogliano gives her undivided attention to guests in order to create a perfect day. “I think the most important thing a bride wants is a unique experience,” Mercogliano said. The Palms Hotel Fire Island focuses on the wedding from start to finish and has a preferred list of vendor options for couples to consider for music, photography, hair and makeup, spa services and florists.

Wedding party packages are available for the entire wedding party. The morning of the wedding, the bride and her bridesmaids will get ready in the Palms’ Bridal Suite and will be given champagne cocktails, cucumber slices to ensure bright eyes and a menu specifically catered toward helping you feel your best including lemon water, turkey wraps and salad platters. Extra mirrors are supplied for makeup and hair.

The groomsmen are placed at the opposite end of the island and are offered a more casual menu including buckets of beer and snacks. Photographers will arrive when parties are getting ready for beautiful, candid photos.

A preferred rate is given to guests as long as the couple holds a minimum of one venue at the hotel, whether it be the rehearsal dinner, ceremony or one of their dinner options. Substantial price reductions are available for standard rooms and suites depending on the bridal package selected. The Honeymoon Suite comes with a complimentary bottle of champagne and rose petals scattered on the bed.

A farewell breakfast the morning after, with pancakes, scrambled eggs, sausage and bacon, provides guests and newlyweds with an opportunity to catch their breath and reminisce about the night before over mimosas and an optional Bloody Mary bar where guests can make their own.

A year after the wedding, The Palms offers newlyweds a complimentary evening at the hotel as a way to say thank you. Visit palmshotelfireisland.com or call 631-583-8870 to learn more.
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COOKING UP A STORM OF FLAVOR with some of the freshest, homemade dishes on Fire Island is Hurricane’s Bar & Grill, a largely al fresco eatery a stone’s throw from the Atlantic in Ocean Bay Park.

Tucked inside the courtyard at the Fire Island Hotel and Resort, Hurricane’s is a cozy, family-style casual American restaurant and tiki bar offering candlelit bistro dinners and the only poolside dining on the west side of the barrier beach – with a creatively mouthwatering menu to match.

“It’s really like a hidden gem,” said Chef Melissa Dodici, the Johnson & Wales University-trained culinary artist who doubles as the locale’s general manager. “The food’s always been really good. People always say, ‘Oh, my God, how did I never know about this place?’”

Of the about two dozen restaurants that dot Fire Island, Hurricane’s is one of a handful touting an ocean side location. Although it doesn’t offer oceanfront views, it is just steps from the dunes – and it’s more low key than the two bayside spots across town: Flynn’s and the Schooner Inn. It’s not to be confused with Hurricane Grill & Wings, the Florida-based sports bar chain.

Established in 1994, Hurricane’s is currently celebrating its silver anniversary, with Dodici leading the kitchen for most of that time – 23 years, a continuity rarely found among FI chefs. Its founding came five years after the debut of the hotel, which boasts a history as a lifesaving station dating back more than a century with an old watchtower billed as the second tallest building on the island besides the lighthouse.

When we hurra-come back, we’ll be sure to try the recommended coconut Thai cod served with roasted fennel, ginger, and coconut broth served over basmati rice. The menu includes gluten-free, vegetarian, and vegan options.

Patrons are urged to follow Hurricane’s on Instagram – the handle is @hurricane-sobp – to catch wind of specials, such as a burger and a beer for $15 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesday all-you-can-eat rib nights, and Thursday family BBQ night. Hurricane’s is also known to make it rain with live music – sometimes a solo artist, other times a band, ranging from jazz to pop – on Saturdays and Sundays. As an added bonus, those who eat at Hurricane’s are welcome to use the pool. Of course, being located at a hotel, the restaurant also plays host to numerous weddings, private parties, and other catered events.

What really blew us away was Dodici’s commitment to using only the freshest ingredients. The fish is fresh caught from the folks at White Cap Fish Market right across the Great South Bay in Islip. Dodici is so dedicated to freshness that she can often be seen picking herbs – mint, basil, fennel, and more – as well as peppers in her garden growing right in the outdoor seating area.

“I try to make everything as homey and fresh as I can,” she said. “I try to put a really homemade twist on my menu.”

This is one hurricane we’re happy to have hit home.

For the appetizers, we eyed the consummately crisp homemade potato chips served with an amazing caramelized onion and tuffle dip, the scrumptious Montauk Mussels in a white wine garlic sauce, and the fried coconut shrimp served with sweet chili sauce that were the perfect combination of crunchy on the outside and succulent on the inside. We also couldn’t resist the pair of local fish tacos, a delightful Cod with Pico de Gallo and an avocado wedge nestled in corn tortillas. Round out our opening round was the heavenly blue claw crab cake and field green salad with tomatoes and roasted corn.

Our main course was forecast as the delectable baby back ribs served with smashed potatoes and sautéed summer vegetables. The Mrs. went with the delicious avocado pepper jack burger, aka “the surfer dude,” served with a side of fresh, homemade rip tide fries. Yes, parents, there were chicken fingers and fries for the little one.

On a recent visit with this reporter’s wife and daughter, our attentive waitress Gabriella ensured warm and friendly service swift as a breeze. We started things off with the signature beverage – an expertly mixed hurricane, of course, made with Plantation Light and Dark rum.
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The Arts Project celebrates WORLD PRIDE | STONEWALL 50

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Commetquot River State Park, Sunrise Highway, Bohemia, presents Firefly Fun, tonight from 8-10 p.m. Discover the world of lightning bugs through exciting activities, then go outside to observe these magical insects. Nets and cages available to catch and release these evening visitors. On June 23, from 1:30-3 p.m., meet Myrtle the Turtle and her friends during an interactive program, Turtles, Snakes, and Frogs. Enjoy a short hike to explore the habitats of these fascinating animals. Parking fee: $5 or Empire Pass. For required reservations, call 631-581-1072.

**18th Annual Benefit Art Show**
Local artists display their nautical artwork in the Keepers Quarter at the Fire Island Lighthouse, through July 14. All artwork is for sale with a portion of the proceeds being donated to the Lighthouse by the artist. For information and hours, visit www.fireislandlighthouse.com.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22
**Flea Market/Bake Sale**
A fundraiser for Ocean Beach Fire Department is held from 10 a.m.-6 p.m., on the Ballfield. Gently used items and bake sale items for donation appreciated. Rain date: June 23. For information, call Gail at 516-312-6774 or Blair at 631-219-1052.

**Pride Parade**
Cherry Grove holds its annual parade at 2 p.m., followed by a benefit for the fire department at 3 p.m., at Cherry’s. An array of cars, floats and walkers, all dressed in pride colors, will parade down the streets of Cherry Grove, enhanced by a street fair along Main Street, with six food trucks, children’s activities and 11 food trucks, children’s activities and tasty ways to improve the Great South Bay. Sample sugar kelp prepared by chefs from Castaway, Hideaway, Island Mermaid, Magazine’s and Matthew’s Seafood House; also oysters and local beers featured. This free event is supported by Ocean Beach Community Fund. For details, visit www.obcfc.org.

**Wednesday, June 26**
**Classic Movies on the Big Screen**
YMCA Boulton Center for the Performing Arts, 37 West Main St., Bay Shore, presents “One Crazy Summer,” tonight, at 7:30 p.m. Cost: $8. For details, call 631-969-1101 or visit www.boultoncenter.org.

**Thursday, June 27**
**“Realism in Watercolor”**
Carlina Valentis exhibits her original watercolors, through July 7, at Bayard Cutting Arboretum, 440 Montauk Hwy., Great River, today from 11 a.m.-4 p.m., in the Annex Galleries of the Manor House. The Gallery is open Thursdays-Sundays, from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. For more information, call 631-581-1002.

**Alive After Five**
Greater Patchogue Chamber of Commerce kicks off its popular free summer street fair along Main Street, with six stages of live music and entertainment, more than 90 craft and retail vendors, 11 food trucks, children’s activities and amusements, a Chinese auction and much more. For the first time, in honor of Pride Month, the event will mark LGBTQ Pride. For details, visit www.aliveafterfive.com.

**Saturday, June 29**
**Nature Nick**
Part of Long Island State Parks Summer Entertainment, Nature Nick will delight audiences with his animal expertise, at St. John’s Landmark Church, Montauk Highway, Oakdale, from 7:8:30 p.m. Through her eyes see the local landscape and changing times as told in her memoir “The Pioneers of Oakdale.” For details, visit Facebook/Oakdale Historical Society or email oakdalehistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

**Sunday, June 23**
**Environmental Awareness Day**
The Village of Ocean Beach Environmental Commission presents “Sustainable Fishing on Long Island,” at Ocean Beach Community House, at 12:30 p.m. Guest speakers will discuss how nitrogen is harming LI waters, benefits to the bay from kelp and oyster farming, and solutions and tasty ways to improve the Great South Bay. Sample sugar kelp prepared by chefs from Castaway, Hideaway, Island Mermaid, Magazine’s and Matthew’s Seafood House; also oysters and local beers featured. This free event is supported by Ocean Beach Community Fund. For details, visit www.obcfc.org.

**Wednesday, July 4**
**Invasion of the Pines**
Meet in downtown Cherry Grove for the annual Pines Invasion, from noon-5 p.m. Join the community as everyone crosses dresses for this annual event. For details, visit www.artsprojectcg.org.

**Thursday, July 4**
**Celebration and Children’s Parade**
Photo by Lauren Chenault
Meet at the Fire House at 10:30 a.m. for the parade (11 a.m.), followed by a cookout at 1 p.m. at the Ballfield, sponsored by Ocean Beach Community Fund. For details, visit oceanbeachcommunityfund.com.

**Saturday, July 6**
**“I Gotta be Me”**
Arts Project of Cherry Grove presents Rose Levine with Broadway melodies, at the Community House, at 8:30 p.m. This annual show features Chris Bell, director, and Mark York, musical director. Tickets: $50; $45 members. For tickets, visit www.artsprojectcg.org or the box office, Saturday and Sunday, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

**UPCOMING/ONGOING**
**Oyster Gardening Program**
The Town of Islip Department of Environmental Control is inviting students, teachers and adults 18 years and older to be a part of an exciting oyster restoration initiative by learning how to become an oyster gardener. Oysters play an important role in the formation of a stable ecosystem, yet due to destruction from natural events, wild oyster populations in the Great South Bay have seen a decline to historic levels. Participants in the program will attend three instructional seminars on the history and science of oyster aquaculture, then will head out into the field to apply that knowledge, helping to garden the world famous Blue Point Oyster.

**Ongoing Adult Education**
**Ongoing Adult Education**
For Island School, Ocean Beach, offers several adult education classes this summer, for ages 18 and older. Registration is recommended but class may be canceled due to low enrollment. The classes being offered are: Tai Chi, Music Appreciation, Summer Crafts, Core and More! and Yoga for Everyone. All classes: $60; except Music Appreciation, $50. If you plan to pay per class (not available for Summer Crafts), please bring a check or exact change. Register early to avoid disappointment! For information, call 631-583-5626, weekdays from 8 a.m.-3 p.m.; or email smccollum@fi.k12.ny.us.

**Free Sunscreen Program**
The Village of Islip and Southside Hospital Northwell Health have partnered to provide free 30 SPF sunscreen at town golf courses, pools and beaches, through Labor Day. Included are Bayport, Sayville, East Islip, Islip, Bay Shore, West Islip, Atlantique, Kismet, Dune-wood, Fair Harbor and Seaview beaches. For a complete list, visit www.islipny.gov.

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IN ITS SIXTH ANNUAL YEAR the Artist Tour of Cherry Grove continues to grow. Founded by artist Susan Ann Thornton to rethink the standard exhibition venues on Fire Island, what started as a handful of artists opening their home studios to visitors and a set aside weekend, has reached new record numbers with 20 participants this year. It is also the second year they collaborated with the Dune Fund, kicking off activities with a silent action Friday evening, June 7, before the tours commenced for the rest of the weekend.

Along Lewis Walk was Dan Evans. Dan is a regular participant at the Arts Project of Cherry Grove art exhibition, which will take place in July, as well as the Fire Island Pines Art’s Project Biennial, which he will be exhibiting with in August. Educated at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Evans’s work seems primitive at first glance, but the sophistication becomes evident the longer you take it in. The bonus of the walking tour format however, is we got to see his garden, complete with a model train set, revealing a new dimension to this sensitive artist and writer.

Larry Crawford is someone who travels from Texas to exhibit at the Grove on a regular basis. He makes small scale pen and ink drawings with a bold graphic presence. He generously donated one of his finest pieces to the Dune Fund auction. Talking to Crawford was time well spent. He proudly showed a selfie on his phone taken not long ago with former U.S. Presidential Candidate Hilary Clinton. “She was so gracious,” he said of her. Crawford makes duplicate portraits of people he admires, then he tracks them down at concerts or speaking engagements. One he asks them to sign, the other he asks them to autograph and keeps for his private collection that includes Cher, Liza Minnelli, and Rod Stewart.

Warren Boyd Wexler is a year-round resident of Fire Island, and a friend of this paper. He recently contributed a letter to the editor that resonated with our readership. His nature photography is a reflection of his strong bond to this island.

On East End Walk was Michele Snyder, who worked in mixed medias, including photography, sea glass jewelry, hand screened tote bags and repurposed art assemblages. Among the most impressive was a window frame painted in metallic blue and decorated with seashells and seaglass. Snyder is a schoolteacher, and there was a certain practicality to her work that reflected this profession in the objects she created, which were items that could be worn or put to use, as well as enjoyed.

Collecting is an important aspect of this tour, because word has spread about the Artist Tour, and there are art collectors – some established – making serious art investments, while others are more entry level, perhaps purchasing art for the very first time.

Michael Fitzgerald understood this as he gave a female couple a tour of the bayfront property he shares with his partner, Robert Levine. Fitzgerald attended Fashion Institute of Technology, and his colorful sculptures and assemblage paintings were rich in drama, and in some ways reminiscent of stage designs.

Making the tour on Sunday, June 9, meant less crowds and a laid back pace. But this also meant that some names on the list closed shop early; no worries, all the more visitors for the artists who kept their doors open.

One such artist was Aronda Xystris, who lives in a quaint saltbox on Main Walk, and was quite busy selling her artwork to customers. It was easy to see why, her gem-like paintings were not only appealing, but upon closer examination, she too was a fan of repurposing with frames that were smartly constructed of beautifully weathered dune fence. There was an “Alice in Wonderland” quality to her garden, which was decorated with an assortment of rusty objects. Inside her home was a light filled space in blue and gray tones, and she was quick to show the next project she was working on.

The waning afternoon light signaled it was time to take the next water taxi home, but what a day it had been. For the Artist Tour of Cherry Grove is about so much more than viewing paintings, sculpture or photographs – it’s an intimate portrait of the artists themselves.

See you again next year.
FOR THE FIRST TIME since New York State passed the 2 percent tax cap in 2011, Fire Island’s two villages are reversing their usual positions on opposite sides of the municipal mandate.

The Village of Saltaire pierced the cap for the first time when its village board voted on April 10 to approve a 2.75 percent property tax hike in its $3.9 million budget. And three days later, the Village of Ocean Beach stayed within the cap for the first time when its trustees approved a 1.9 percent property tax increase in its $6 million budget.

“The need for a tax increase this year was in part to catch up with rising costs while forging tax rate increases,” said Saltaire Village Administrator Mario Posillico, noting that the village had no tax hikes for the past six years except in 2016, when it had a 2 percent increase. “We have larger-than-normal interest on short-term debt to carry numerous large FEMA projects and await reimbursement.”

The role reversal came the same week that the New York State Legislature voted to make the 2 percent tax cap — which previously had to be periodically renewed — permanent. In the eight years since the law was initially enacted, local property tax growth has averaged 1.9 percent statewide, compared to 5.3 percent average growth from 2000 to 2010, according to state officials.

“New York has some of the highest property taxes in the nation and people were being taxed out of their homes until we passed our historic 2 percent local property tax cap,” said Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Ocean Beach had trouble staying within the cap from the get go. Shortly before the state initially enacted the tax cap in June of 2011, the village passed a nearly 9 percent tax hike. A year later, it passed a 3.9 percent hike, which was trimmed back a percentage point following what Mayor James Mallott then called “a spirited debate.”

Then Superstorm Sandy devastated much of Fire Island in the fall of 2012, throwing both budgets and business as usual far off course. To pay for the massive reconstruction of infrastructure ranging from the water well to the sewage plant, Ocean Beach had double digit property tax hikes for many of the years since. Much of that work is reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, but the village still had to front the cost of the work and then wait for federal bureaucracy to approve repayment.

“We look like we are in good shape,” Mallott told residents during a public hearing on the budget this spring. “I think we’ll get to 3 percent going forward the next few years.”

Saltaire, which is older and geographically larger but also less populated than Ocean Beach and lacking the bustling downtown, weathered Sandy without as dramatic of tax hikes. Saltaire pre-emptively voted to pierce the tax cap every year since 2011, but this was the first year it followed through with its 8 percent spending increase of $300,000.

Besides the FEMA reimbursements, both villages also are well positioned financially. They both have AAA bond ratings, meaning that they are able to borrow money at low interest rates. In effect, because they have good credit, it costs taxpayers less when the villages borrowed money to pay for reconstruction before being reimbursed by FEMA.

Across the greater Long Island area, school taxes historically make up the largest chunk of the property tax bill. But as far as the barrier beach is concerned, the Fire Island School District continues to remain below the 2 percent tax cap, with no tax increase for three consecutive years.

“Through cost-saving initiatives and fiscal efficiencies, the budget ... continues to support all educational and co-curricular programs currently in place, including the district’s robust music, fine arts and technology-integrated instructional practices,” district officials wrote. “With an eye toward long-range planning, the budget also includes the use of alternative revenue sources” such as charging tuition for out-of-district students to attend classes at the Woodhull School.

The villages are likewise eyeing alternate revenue streams. In Saltaire, that sometimes comes in the form of one-shot deals such as auctioning off surplus land. During Ocean Beach’s budget debate, officials noted that they’re considering raising fines, but cautioned that bigger fines should be a deterrent to would-be law breakers and result in no fines.

“The fine is an incentive not to do something,” noted Ocean Beach Deputy Mayor Matthew Blake. “If this actually works that number should go further down. Let’s not confuse raising the fine amount by thinking we will gross up revenue. Ideally, we’d like zero fines.”

In 2019, only 18 out of 96 villages on Long Island indicated to the New York State Comptroller’s office that they intended to pierce the tax cap this year, although how many of those actually did when their budget passed wasn’t immediately clear.
Dear Camirose,

What should I do when someone I know has had others lie and say they live in Ocean Beach year-round when they really do not? I'm in a tough spot because I don't want someone to lose their vehicle permit, but it's just wrong. What should I do? Tell the National Seashore or just let it go?

— What's Good for the Goose is Good for the Gander

Dear Good Gander,

I agree. What's good for one should be good for all. Unfortunately things don't always turn out that way. There are a lot of people who get away with things because of who they know. There are also others who just lie to get what they want, and of course those who follow the rules. Honestly, I think I'd stay out of it. I'm not saying that you should condone the behavior, but sometimes things are not what they seem. Are you sure you have all the facts? Is this something that concerns or hinders you in any way? I'm just saying that sometimes we think we know the whole story and think we are helping in some way, when in fact there may be serious pieces missing from the story. If that is the case, in the end you may wind up with egg on your face.

— Camirose

Dear Camirose,

I have a retired neighbor who is very needy. I visit her once in a while with a treat and sit and talk. She often will sit and greet me as I'm leaving for work, from her window (which faces the parking lot). I say ‘good morning’ or nod and she will always have a question or comment – quite early in the morning. She has even started to greet me upon my return home and will call me the minute I'm in the house, asking me if everything's okay since I arrived home a little later than usual. I have gently tried to explain that first thing in the morning and right after work are not the best times for me to engage in conversation. This has been to no avail. She continues to do exactly what I am asking her not to do. I am dreading the summer. Last summer was the worst ever with her intrusive behavior. What else can I possibly do to discourage her?

— Busy Neighbor

Dear Busy Neighbor,

It seems as though you have tried to be kind and gentle with her by explaining how you feel. Is she an elderly woman who is lonely and in need of companionship? Or is she simply rude? She probably looks forward to seeing you and talking. You may very well be the highlight of her day. If it is a matter of loneliness, perhaps you can try to talk to her about senior groups that she can join. This way your visits can be in combination with activities she is enjoying with her new group of friends. Try to continue to be kind to her even though you are feeling annoyed. We never know the sadness another might be feeling. Keep being the friend you've been. You'll be happy you did.

— Camirose

Names and locations have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals. Questions for Camirose? Write to her at advice@fireisland-news.com.
Bad Day on the High Seas
“Tootsie” ★★★★★

THE MUSICAL “TOOTSIE” is based on the wonderfully fun 1982 film that starred Dustin Hoffman and is based on the story by Don McGuire and Larry Gelbart.

Michael Dorsey is an unemployed actor who is very difficult to work with. He transforms himself into Dorothy Michaels to try to get a part in the big new Broadway musical (in the film, it was a role in a soap opera) “Juliet’s Curse,” a sequel to “Romeo and Juliet,” and lands the role of Juliet’s nurse. Through Dorothy Michaels, Michael Dorsey channels his inner woman and through that becomes charming and alluring to everyone.

The are two elements that make this musical exceptional: The book, by Robert Horn, is a non-stop laugh riot, with the one liners coming at you fast and furious, from beginning to end; and the leading performance of Santino Fontana as Michael Dorsey/Dorothy Michaels. He is an attractive man who sings a totally believable woman.

Jessica Lange her first Academy Award. Lange’s performance is far more dainty, while Nichols’s Julie is more self-assured and self-reliant and she has a glorious singing voice. David Yazbek, who last year won a Tony Award for his beautiful score for “The Band’s Visit,” has written a nice score for “Tootsie,” with an entirely different sound than that of “The Band’s Visit.” The director Scott Ellis does a wonderful job of keeping everything moving. The quick changes of Michel Dorsey becoming Dorothy Michaels and back again are jaw dropping. Denis Jones’s choreography is bouncy and jubilant.

This is how to do a film to Broadway musical adaptation and do everything right. Kudos to all.

“Hadestown” ★★★★★

“HADESTOWN” began as a concept album by composer Anaïs Mitchell in 2010. The musical premiered at the New York Theatre Workshop in 2016. It was then reworked and premiered at the National Theatre in London in November 2018, before arriving on Broadway this March.

“Hadestown” is based on the Orpheus and Eurydice myth, updated to a depression era New Orleans nightclub. Orpheus and Eurydice meet and fall deeply in love. When Eurydice is killed by a snake-bite, Orpheus travels to the underworld to plead with the King of the Underworld, Hades, to bring Eurydice back to life.

Mitchell, who has written the wonderful music, lyrics and book for “Hadestown;” along with Rachel Lauck’s scenic design; Michael Krauss’s costume design; Nevin Steinberg’s and Jessica Paz’s sound design; and, in particular, Bradley King’s evocative lighting design, all come together to create the mood and ambiance for this musical to thrive.

Rachel Chavkin, who helped develop this piece with Mitchell, is the outstanding director. She is, by far, the most innovative and creative director working today. She has proven this before with her direction of “Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812,” but this time, she has and will continue to be awarded for her genius. The cast is an amazing ensemble. Orpheus is described as having a “golden voice” and is able to “charm all living things.” Reeve Carney is the personification of that, as he does have a golden voice and has charm and charisma to spare. Eva Noblezada, who previously starred in the West End and Broadway revival of “Miss Saigon,” is a beautifully voiced Eurydice. Amber Gray, who previously appeared on Broadway in “Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812,” for which she won a Theatre World Award for her Broadway debut performance, is glorious as Persephone, wife of Hades and goddess of the seasons. She gives a thoroughly winning and fun performance. Best yet are the two scene-stealing Broadway veterans. Patrick Page, whose deep, basso profundo voice creates a memorable Hades; and Andre De Shields as Hermes, the messenger of the gods and the narrator of the story. De Shields glistens in a silver suit, glides and saunters through the proceedings, taking the audience along for the ride. In a career that has spanned 50 years, the multiple Tony nominated performer has delivered show stopping performances in “The Wiz” and “The Full Monty.” This time, for “Hadestown,” De Shields finally received his well-earned Best Actor in a Musical Tony Award, and he will continue to be rewarded for his amazing performance.

De Shields’s Tony was one of eight that “Hadestown” took home on June 9, 2019. Others included in the sweep were Best Musical; Anaïs Mitchell, Best Original Score; Rachel Hauck, Best Scenic Design of a Musical; Bradley King, Best Lighting of a Musical; Nevin Steinberg’s and Jessica Paz’s Best Sound Design of a Musical; Rachel Chavkin, Best Musical Director; and finally Michael Chorney and Todd Sickafus for Best Orchestration. Each and every one is well deserved for this ground breaking production. Bravo everyone!
IT MAY TAKE A VILLAGE to raise a child, but it took 17 Fire Island communities to take down Robert Moses. It was no small task to tackle the power broker who ruled the roadways with a finger snap in the ‘60s, but Moses had his hands full when he set his mind on a four-lane highway through the barrier beaches of the South Shore. When you consider his penchant for roads and causeways, you might say Moses was a driven man. I mean that literally – having never bothered getting a driver’s license, he was chauffeured around by state-provided handlers.

It is clear that author Christopher Verga, a professor at Suffolk County Community College, is no fan of urban renewal in the hands of Robert Moses.

He tells of the master builder who bulldozed entire New York City neighborhoods and left residents – animals, he called them, scrambling to find new housing. When local politicians tried to fight for their supporters who objected to the great builder’s plans, Moses turned to his more powerful cronies to outvote them. Though not trained as an engineer, architect or urban planner, Moses controlled millions of dollars for his projects. He also had a firm grip on the press.

In 1964 when rookie reporter Karl Grossman criticized him for ill treatment of civil rights activists, Moses had him fired from his job at the Babylon Town Leader. His publisher was his New York City neighbor who chauffeured around by state-provided handlers.

His stunning defeat came in 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill that created the National Seashore and designated 33 miles of Fire Island as a National Seashore. Public outcry pressured the League of Women Voters to designate Fire Island as a National Seashore.

Verga tells a compelling tale of how Maurice Barbash, Fire Island resident and builder of Dunewood, and lawyer Irving Like, spearheaded the citizens’ committee to designate Fire Island as a National Seashore. Grassroots roots activism spread across the island. The League of Women Voters got involved. Environmental mainland organizations that were beginning to gain traction had their say in favor of keeping Fire Island the way it was and had always been.

No cars. No fumes spoil the clean air. Residents wrote letters. They had meetings. They made phone calls – no cell phones then – landline only. They roused public opinion to their side.

It wasn’t only the locals Moses had to contend with. He had Laurance Rockefeller, founder of the American Conservation Association and Interior Secretary Stewart Udall, who believed a highway across Fire Island would be detrimental to the its natural environment.

His stunning defeat came in 1964 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed a bill that created the National Seashore and designated 33 miles of Fire Island as a national park. Public outcry pressured him to resign from his five state posts. Moses was toast. Fire Island definitely was not his Promised Land.

Included in the text are photos from libraries, archives and Verga’s personal collection. One snapshot shows two nuns in full habit with their black skirts hiked up clamming in the South Shore waters. Only on Fire Island.
IN 2005, the driving of a reckless boater in the Great South Bay critically injured three members of the Lieneck family and claimed the life of the family’s youngest, Brianna, at the age of 11. Ever since, Gina Lieneck, Brianna’s mother, has been fighting to implement Brianna’s Law, legislation that would require all boaters in the state of New York to complete an eight-hour safety course before maneuvering their boat on the water.

Presently, boaters born before May 1, 1996, are exempt from taking a safety course and new boat owners are given a 120-day grace period before they must take the course. This leaves two significant populations, older boaters who have been driving boats around New York waterways for decades and those who have barely owned a boat at all, who are not required to be informed about the rules, regulations, and overall boater safety before they use their boats. Although it may seem as though the population of newer boaters would be less informed, Lieneck notes that often times it is the older boaters who have forgotten many of the regulations and rules.

Brianna’s Law aims to change this and would require all boaters to take the safety course, regardless of age or length of boat ownership. It also requires that the safety course be approved by the Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The law provides a five-year phase-in for boat owners to become compliant with the new requirements.

The passage of the law through the New York State Assembly and Senate onto Governor Cuomo is largely due to the hard work and continued dedication of Gina Lieneck. Lieneck has seen the legislation through each phase and has secured the support of legislators who have, as a result of her advocacy, introduced the legislation into the Assembly and Senate in turn. Senator John E. Brooks, 8th District, sponsored the bill and worked with co-sponsors Senators Phil Boyle, Jamaal T. Bailey, Neil D. Breslin, David Carlucci and others to pass the legislation in the Senate. In an interview with CBS New York, Lieneck spoke about her motivation for continuing such a long battle to have the legislation passed. Lieneck said, “I can make a promise to her that I would make the waterways safer for other families, and make sure this never happens to them.”

Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre sponsored the bill in the State Assembly and advocated for its passing. In a press release announcing the passage of the bill Jean-Pierre spoke passionately about the impact the legislation will have. “Accidents happen whether on land or on water, but having knowledge of boating safety and navigation laws will help keep those from turning deadly. I’m so proud to have introduced Brianna’s Law because it will save lives by truly making New York’s waterways safer,” Jean-Pierre argued.

Speaker Carl Heastie also highlighted the importance of the bill. “Summer is coming, and more and more New Yorkers are heading to our lakes, rivers, and waterways. Requiring boaters to take safety classes before heading out on the water will help save lives and prevent accidents from Lake Erie to the Long Island Sound,” he said.

It has been a rollercoaster journey for the Brianna’s Law bill, with disappointment last summer when it passed the State Assembly on June 19, 2018, but failed to make a State Senate vote before the Legislature session ended for the summer.

Now that the law has passed through the New York State Assembly and Senate, it can move forward to the desk of Governor Cuomo who CBS 6 Albany reports is expected to sign the legislation into action. Depending on Governor Cuomo, the legislation could take effect beginning as early as January 2020. Lieneck reflected on the process: “I just burst out in tears. I just couldn’t believe it because it’s been so many years.”
A QUESTION I GET ASKED A LOT IS, “What’s one food I should avoid to better my health?” My reply is always, “Bread.” That’s often replied with, “What’s something else I can give up?” I know that’s a tough answer to hear. We love our bread. But bread is not the “staff of life” it used to be. The bread aisle alone is probably the biggest culprit to the rise in diabetes and weight gain in our society. A bold statement I know, but the next time you stroll down the aisle take a look at the ingredients in some of those brands.

Even the more “healthier” whole-wheat companies are no better. They are all made with refined flours, cheap trans fats, and hidden sweeteners. So when we eat a classic turkey sandwich for lunch we are actually causing huge spikes in our insulin levels from the way the bread gets converted into glucose.

Truth be told, it’s kind of like having your sandwich between a donut. (All kidding aside, there’s actually a hamburger out there that is served between two doughnuts!) To make bread it takes water, flour, salt, and yeast, but today’s bread has a laundry list of ingredients that are meant to keep it preserved on the shelf or in your cupboard.

I did an experiment for one year with one of the more popular bread brands. I wanted to see how long it would take to mold or rot. Granted I did keep it wrapped up, but a year went by without any sign of change from the day I bought it. No thanks!

Other reasons that bread is causing issues have been linked to the gluten protein that is found in wheat, specifically wheat. This protein has been linked to inflammation in the gut lining contributing to weight gain and IBS issues. Even worse, gluten is a severe factor for those suffering from celiac disease. One morsel of gluten can cause a serious onset for someone with this condition.

More recent concerns have come from the way wheat is being grown, specifically here in the U.S. Wheat is one crop that is overly sprayed with pesticides, specifically a chemical called glyphosate. (Sounds tasty!) However, this chemical has a host of side effects that many researchers are starting to look to problems in our health, even cancer. One of the interesting comparisons is that in Europe glyphosate is not being used, and some people with gluten intolerances have reported not having any issues when eating the bread over there. So the question has been raised, is it the gluten or the glyphosate that is causing the issues? We will see over time as more research emerges.

As I mentioned, another issue with bread is the sugars that are added. It is not an ingredient that you would think is common, but our standard slices can be filled with hidden sugars like high-fructose corn syrup and others. This changes everything for the childhood classic of peanut butter and jelly. Hidden sugars like this can cause metabolic issues that can contribute to the rise in childhood illness like diabetes and obesity.

If you are looking to enjoy some bread, look for companies using quality ingredients. A better version would be companies that are using sprouted whole grains. These are grains that are being used in the infancy stages of growth that have the most nutritional benefits, and are comparatively gentle on our digestive system.

Also, look for organic sourced brands that are grown with stricter guidelines, and possibly no glyphosate or other pesticides.

Most importantly stick with the least amount of ingredients. As mentioned it only takes a few ingredients to make bread, anything more than that you have the bread that lasts on the shelf for over a year. Remember, real food rots and our bread should be stale within a few days, if in fact it is real bread at all.
The Stonewall Before Stonewall

IT BEING LGBTQ PRIDE MONTH commemorating the Stonewall riots, which happened this month 50 years ago, it is most timely to revisit the successful challenge to police raids on gay communities of Fire Island – which the year earlier preceded what happened in 1969 at Stonewall Inn, the Greenwich Village gay club.

It was an outrageous annual tradition: The police raid on those havens for gay men on Fire Island, Cherry Grove and Fire Island Pines. It took gay men taking their chances with juries composed of residents of Suffolk County – as proposed by a prominent, feisty, rough-and-tumble Suffolk County attorney, Benedict P. Vuturo.

The juries, one after another in the fall of 1968, found the gay men rounded up in the summer 1968 raid on Fire Island, innocent. And that did it – the Suffolk County Police Department finally stopped the raids.

What happened for many years to gays on Fire Island seems like a nightmare of another time – and it was. So much since has changed. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage as a constitutional right in all 50 states. There have been enormous social changes in regard to gay men and lesbian women and others with a non-traditional sex identity and thus the emergence of the movement acronymed LGBTQ for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. Still the battle is far from over.

I am writing this just days after a Florida state representative named Mike Hill mused publicly about a death penalty being imposed for homosexuality. And there is intense repression in many countries overseas.

These raids on Fire Island every summer were a tradition begun by the Brookhaven Town Police Department. Half of Fire Island, which is just over 32 miles long, lies in the Town of Brookhaven – including the Fire Island Pines and Cherry Grove. With the end of the Brookhaven department and its joining with many other town and village departments in Suffolk into a Suffolk County Police Department in 1960, the perverse tradition was continued by the new county police force.

I first became aware of the raids when hired in 1964 by the daily Long Island Press as a police-and-courts reporter covering Suffolk. It was like pulling teeth sometimes to get information from the Suffolk cops. But after their annual raid on Fire Island, the cops wanted the media to know all about it – pitching to journalists not only the names and addresses of those arrested – but their occupations and where they worked. The police effort was clearly meant to damage those arrested, to perhaps get them fired for being gay and being arrested in a raid on Fire Island. The raids were made by boatloads of cops storms the beach. Prisoners were dragged off in handcuffs and brought to the mainland.

Year after year, the 25 to 40 or so defendants, most of them from New York City and frightened about casting their lot with Suffolk County locals, would plead guilty to various “morals” charges. Then one judge began sentencing some arrestees to jail, getting himself plenty of publicity. The Fire Island gay community had it.

The trials were some scenes. Vuturo toughly cross-examined arresting officers demanding they tell in detail what they saw and did, often leaving the cops red-faced, embarrassed.

And then, in his summations to the juries, Vuturo spoke dramatically about murders and other major crimes occurring in Suffolk and how, he declared, the Suffolk County Police Department was wasting its resources storming Fire Island to round up gays.

“To be on Fire Island – in Cherry Grove or Fire Island Pines – when the cops are there for a raid is to put your life in your hands,” he intoned. “The cops go and beat the bush. They grab you and handcuff you to whoever…Was a breach of the peace committed? Who saw it but the cops who went looking?”

For Vuturo it was a matter of “civil liberties are civil liberties.”

He hoped to lose one case so he could get to the New York State Court of Appeals or U.S. Supreme Court to try to have the laws under which the arrests were made ruled unconstitutional, but he never lost a single one of the “Fire Island trials” as they were referred to in court corridors during fall 1968.

Dick Leitch, president of the Mattachine Society of New York, told me that the gay rights group had first considered hiring New York City lawyers, specialists in civil liberties work, to defend the arrestees in the next police raid on Fire Island. “But we figured the courts out there might view them as outside agitators,” he explained. So the society, he said, spoke to some members of the Suffolk County chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and the flamboyant Vuturo, based in Central Islip in Suffolk, was recommended.

Vuturo, a father of five, who went on to himself become a Suffolk County District Court judge, and who died in 1991, was key to ending a travesty. And so were the Suffolk jurors who showed that the jury system works. And deserving huge credit are those gay men of Fire Island who stood up to prejudice and hate in a dark time.
The Historical Society of Islip Hamlet's Oakwood Cemetery Tour

By Lorna Luniewski

ONE OF THE BENEFITS OF WORKING on the calendar for this publication is that I always know what is going on. So when an interesting item about a tour of Oakwood Cemetery in Bay Shore found its way to me, I decided to go.

The June 4 tour, featuring docents in period dress, began with Joe Nolan, superintendent of Oakwood Cemetery, giving a brief history. In 1880, 13 businessmen from Islip and Bay Shore contributed $100 each to buy 40 acres from Nathaniel Clock to create a non-denominational cemetery between the two hamlets. Clock from Islip and Dr. Mowbray of Bay Shore spearheaded the venture. According to the program, it was common for families to purchase plots, between $30 to $60 depending on the size, and by 1885, the mortgage was paid and excess funds were used to buy the cemetery superintendent a suit.

Nolan explained there were sections in the cemetery during its early years, including for Native Americans, which was separated from Caucasians; the Welfare Section, commonly known as Potter’s Field, a portion of the cemetery Town of Islip; and the Town Board bought to give a decent burial to the Harder Field, a portion of the cemetery Town of Islip. Persons of Color, including its early years, including sections in the cemetery during the Civil War. Their house was not recovered but a mark was thrown overboard. His body hung when he pledged allegiance to the Union; Abraham Lincoln’s assassination. He was spared allegedly gave assistance to John Wilkes Booth after Ruggles, a confederate division general who he and his team beat them on the 20-mile course, by 30 minutes in the first race and by 38 minutes in the second.

The other residents featured on the tour were Mortimer Ruggles, a confederate division general who allegedly gave assistance to John Wilkes Booth after Abraham Lincoln’s assassination. He was spared hanging when he pledged allegiance to the Union; Captain George Burr, who owned an oyster sloop and was killed aboard that vessel and thrown overboard. His body was not recovered but a marker is placed in the family plot; Hank Haff, also an America’s Cup skipper (Oakwood Cemetery has more Cup defenders and contenders than anywhere in the world) who skippered the “Mischief” against the Canadians in the America’s Cup Race. Although they made fun of his metal boat, nicknaming it “The Iron Pot,” he and his team beat them on the 20-mile course, by 30 minutes in the first race and by 38 minutes in the second.

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Another tour stop was the Chapel for Oakwood Cemetery, constructed in 1928. Originally constructed for $50,000 to serve as a mausoleum for several prominent families, they decided they wanted their own family plots and donated it for use as a chapel.

During its 149-year history, more than 17,000 people have been buried there, with around 600 empty plots remaining. A columbarium was built in 1980 and 2017 to accommodate those who wish to be cremated.

The Historical Society of Islip Hamlet was founded in 1992. If you would like to join (residency not required), write to the Society at PO Box 601, Islip, NY 11751; or visit www.islishamlet.org.
STONEWALL REBELLION: The Best and Worst of Times

WHO REALLY KNOWS why it all happened? Probably no one, not even those who were there. At least that’s how the story of the Stonewall riots continues to be told. But something was in the air that sweltering night at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York, June 28, 1969, a crazy night during crazy times.

Judy Garland, a darling of the gay community, had died recently and her funeral had taken place just hours before the events of that historic night. Emotions were raw, and her death probably had nothing to do with what happened. No one knows, but the impact of her death lives on like a xeroxed zombie, and a spontaneous riot did erupt later that night at the Stonewall Inn.

Not that the Stonewall Inn was much of a place. In 1966, the Mafia had turned two storefronts located at 51-53 Christopher Street into a gay bar frequented primarily by men. It had no running water behind the bar. Glasses were merely rinsed out in tubs of dirty water before being reused. The toilets were famous for overflowing and there were no fire exits. The place did not even have a liquor license. But none of that prevented the Stonewall Inn from becoming the gay bar in New York City. Its big draw was that it was the only homosexual bar that permitted dancing, and that was enough.

So, what happened and why? Maybe it was just the times, or maybe it was just time for a riot.

The consensus is that the NYPD, who raided the Stonewall Inn on a regular basis, confronted a crowd of about 200 people who, though long accustomed to such raids, were in no mood to be manhandled that particular night.

Four plainclothes cops, two others in uniform and two supervisors showed up at 1:20 a.m. for a routine raid. Typically, the cops would segregate the transvestites from the rest of the crowd to check whether their gender matched their attire. Any men dressed as women, or women as men, would be arrested … but not that night.

The drag queens refused to be searched, and other patrons refused to show their ID. Those who complied with police orders were kicked out of the bar, but instead of going home they remained outside and continued to taunt the police. Meanwhile, the police handcuffed those arrested and escorted them out to a waiting paddy wagon. When the cops went in to bring out others, the first prisoners escaped. It was like a circus act featuring the Keystone Kops, but the circus atmosphere hid an underlying disquiet with an edge of anger.

One “stone-cold dyke” in handcuffs scuffled with the police until one cop hit her with a billy club. As she was being thrown into the paddy wagon she yelled to the crowd. “Why don’t you guys do something?” The crowd went berserk and started throwing bottles, rocks, bricks, anything they could get their hands on. Homeless gay street kids led the attack. A group of cops left for reinforcements while others barricaded themselves inside the inn. The “fairies” had finally had enough. They rebelled.

Someone liberated a parking meter and used it as a battering ram against the Stonewall’s doors. Others set garbage cans on fire and hurled them against the building. They smashed windows and stuffed the burning garbage through the broken glass. The cops used a fire hose but water pressure was insufficient.

The Tactical Police Force (TPF) finally arrived equipped with full-face helmets and truncheons. The mocking mob broke out in a spur-of-the-moment kickline to the tune of “Ta-ra-ra-Boom-de-ray,” singing, “We are the Stonewall girls/We wear our hair in curls/We don’t wear underwear/We show our pubic hair/And wear our dungarees/Above ournelly knees.”

The cops moved forward in a wedge formation to clear the area. Another kickline formed. Another police wedge. Kickline. Wedge. The riots continued until 4 a.m. and resumed the following night. They persisted until Wednesday when the crowd advanced on the offices of the Village Voice, perhaps the most liberal newspaper in the city, threatening to burn it down because of its demeaning coverage of the rebellion and its name-calling: “forces of faggotry,” “limp wrists,” “Sunday fag follies.”

An eye witness said, “The cops were totally over the rainbow skies are blue, where the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.”

The police wrote the incident up as “an unusual occurrence.”

The New York Daily News ran a blatantly offensive headline: “Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad.” The New York Times ran a small column buried somewhere deep in the paper, but at least the world began to pay attention to LBGTQ rights.

The Beat Poet Allen Ginsberg (“Howl!”) wrote: “You know, the guys there were so beautiful — they’ve lost that wounded look that fags all had 10 years ago.”

On the one-year anniversary of the uprising, Christopher Street Liberation Day was held in New York City. Sister parades were held in Los Angeles and Chicago — these were the first gay pride parades in U.S. history. The following year there were parades in six major U.S. cities as well as four international capitals: London, Paris, West Berlin and Stockholm.

Unfortunately, the Stonewall Inn itself only lasted another six months after the riots. In subsequent years it was home to various businesses before reopening as a gay establishment in the late 1990s. It underwent major renovations in 2007, and is now fully operational, paying homage to its rich heritage.

In 2000, the Stonewall Inn was designated a National Historic Landmark, and in 2016 President Obama announced the establishment of the 7.7 acre Stonewall National Monument that included Christopher Street and the Inn. It is the first and only LBGTQ national monument.

Here on Fire Island, the Cherry Grove Community House and Theater has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2013, because of its intimate connection with LBGTQ history.

A mere three weeks before the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion, Thursday, June 6, 2019, NYPD Commissioner James O’Neill apologized to the LBGTQ community stating, “The actions taken by the NYPD were wrong — plain and simple. The actions and laws were discriminatory and oppressive, and, for that, I apologize.”

Friday, June 28, 2019, is the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion, the birthday of Gay Liberation, a celebration of gender nonconformity. “Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue, where the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.”

335 Years of Islip Celebrated at Living History Event

By Rebecca Hoey

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1683, was the Living History of Islip Town Day at Islip Grange Park in Sayville. No, you didn’t just read a typo in the date because it really did feel like we were back 335 years ago, reminiscent of the actual birth-year of the town in 1683.

In continuum for the year-long celebration for Islip’s big birthday bash, this bright and sunny day was the perfect backdrop for the re-creation of the town’s valuable history. It was filled with soldiers, antique fire engines, a replicated WWI plane, games that were representative of what children played years ago, and more.

A staple in the reenactments was Co K. 67th NY Historical Association, who offered us a part in the Civil War. You could feel the tension the actors dealt with planning their next move in the tent as you stood near.

From the other side of the battlefront, members of The Society of the Grand Army of the Republic were dressed in their redcoats marching proudly around. The British side of the battle was represented well here.

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The more we saw as we walked around, the more we felt a part of the era and the battles that took place. Of course the appreciation for all that has been done and sacrificed for us, grew as well.

My daughter and I were also really excited to see our friend from the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps/Lt. Michael Murphy Division at the event. We made sure to get a shot of this dedicated and honorable group.

The special airplane that we were lucky enough to get a shot of is a ⅞ of a scale replica of an actual WWI fighter, presented courtesy of Bob Mott, president of the Antique Airplane Club of Greater New York. Such objects are from a bit further down the Islip history timeline of course, but seriously, who doesn’t want to check out one of these?

Upon speaking with Historian Tom Rinelli, we learned that the fire engine at the event, humbly named “Honey Bee,” was built in 1856, and purchased by Patchogue Fire Company Engine Company 1 in 1880 for $300. It has since remained there, where it was eventually combined with a 1960 Mack by fire department members. “We greatly appreciate that the Patchogue Fire Department brought this special truck here today,” Rinelli said. The other fire truck we were lucky enough to be able to view has been with the West Sayville Fire Department since 1891. Rinelli shared the fact that it was actually the department’s first ladder truck, and was hand-drawn. It was previously on view at the Islip Town Fire & EMS Museum and Education Center. But it is now back home at the West Sayville Fire Department.

The stunning antique water-pumper we viewed has been here since 1891. Incredibly, it can still be pumped by hand. If you missed this masterpiece of fire equipment, you can view it at the Islip Town Fire & EMS Museum and Education Center.

We also were happy to see that this event was combined with the Sayville Farmer’s Market, as it allowed us the chance to check out the fresh farm produce, delicious baked goods, and much more. This also allowed us to visit an extra special little guest.

Attendees were able to visit with a newborn lamb. Rejected by her mom, this baby was attached to Chris Van De Wetering of Goodale Farms. “This is nothing unusual, and now I get to bottle feed her and take her wherever I go,” said Van De Wetering. You too can visit with this baby weekly throughout the summer at the Farmer’s Market to watch her grow.

Most of the folks who worked so diligently to create this special day agreed that despite the low turnout, which some think was possibly low publicity, or it being the first year of the event, felt that it was a good day for an incredibly special town.
FIN: Could you tell me a little bit more about the ways that your comedy manifests? What makes people think.
Scarnici: I think it’s mainly the atmosphere that allows me to be sort of like an off-center voice in queer comedy. I’m a bearded drag queen and that was something that was really big in Cherry Grove in the ’50s. That wasn’t big in popular culture up until the past few years. I’ve always liked to toy with identity and that’s something that I got from the Grove. I would say that the Grove has really just influenced the way I approach comedy, as opposed to the topics that I talk about. Hedda Lettuce is a drag queen out here and if you go to her show, she’ll talk about Fire Island, but I don’t really do that except for this book. In my regular world, more about taking what I’ve learned from the Grove to create different characters, sort of like fucking with the status quo if you will.

FIN: Yes, absolutely. Do you see your comedy as part of a larger activism, using the power of narrative to change people’s perceptions about LGBTQ issues, but also maybe change their perceptions about the ways in which society is heteronormative and oppressive of other gender identities?
Scarnici: Yes, the reason I choose to keep a beard when I do drag is because it’s the most in-your-face style of drag. There’s so many times where someone will see me in drag from behind, and then I turn around and they see I have a beard and they don’t know how to react. It makes them think about gender identity and I can see them thinking, ‘Oh God, for a second I was attracted to that woman’s legs, but now it’s a guy.’ I kind of like genderfuck drag because it makes people think.

FIN: Could you tell me a little bit more about the other ways that your comedy changes during Pride Month? Do you feel like the Grove changes during Pride Month?
Scarnici: If you were to focus on a particular topic you think I’ll get a stronger message for every essay. If you could predict and mold the future of Cherry Grove and the Fire Island Pines, what do you think the next book that I’m working on will be like?
FIN: Obviously right now it is Pride Month, but how do you feel like Fire Island changes during Pride Month? Do you feel like the atmosphere of this month changes the atmosphere in the Grove and the Pines?
Scarnici: I actually feel it’s the opposite. I love the Gay Pride Parade we have in the Grove the week before the main one in the city because it’s so adorable. It’s literally 15 minutes long, with a bunch of drag queens on golf carts It’s really fun and cute. So I kind of feel the Grove does pride in its own way and let’s NYC have its shining moment the next weekend.

FIN: Can you talk about how this book feels or how this collection of essays feels different to you than your previous collection? Also, if your readers can expect continued discussion and reflection on Fire Island in future books, if you’re planning to create another collection of essays?
Scarnici: I am working on another collection of essays but to be honest with you I’m not going to focus on Fire Island again because the main reason that I – let me start over again. My first book was like a little random and I like to write random essays because you go from one to the next and you don’t know where it’s going and I love that style, and the feedback I got from my first publisher was like, ‘If you were to focus on a particular topic you think I’ll get a stronger book.’ So then I made a book that was entirely about Fire Island and when I shopped to find a publisher for it my publisher that published the first book literally was like, ‘Oh, Fire Island, too niche, no one knows about it, 10 percent of the people are gay, 5 percent of them know about Fire Island, no one’s going to touch this book with a 10-foot pole.’ [laughs] So I think the next book that I’m working on will have a different theme.

FIN: Is there something that you hope readers take away from this book or do you feel like there’s a different message for every essay?
Scarnici: I think the overarching theme of this book is that Cherry Grove is a place where you can be whoever the hell you are without anyone’s judgment, and it’s wonderful to find places like that in the world.

FIN: If you could predict and mold the future of Cherry Grove and the Fire Island Pines, what do you hope those communities continue to evolve and become over time?
Scarnici: I hope they continue to evolve to be accepting of all types of people – whether they’re from the LGBTQ community or one of the newer, straight families that have started summering in the Grove. Some people out here think The Grove should be a queer haven, but if we’re not accepting of our straight brothers and sisters, we’re basically discriminating against them like the LGBTQ community has been by mainstream society for so long, and that’s not right. We have to be accepting of everyone on our magical gay island.
Cake and Dessert
Rachel’s Bakery in Ocean Beach has been satisfying the island’s sweet tooth since 1975. The family-owned bakery offers a plethora of dessert options when catering a reception, from raspberry jam tarts to double chocolate brownies to house made gelato and mini cupcakes. But, of course, the wedding cake should be the real showstopper. Co-owner Joe Doering said Rachel’s takes a more traditional route for wedding cakes by using buttercream frosting rather than fondant. “No fancy stuff,” Doering said. Serving sizes range from 6 inches all the way up to half sheet cake that can feed 55 to 60 people. Chocolate with vanilla frosting is a popular choice but they can accommodate any preference from strawberry shortcake to sour cream marble cake and other recipes. And just in case you didn’t get enough treats at the reception, don’t worry, Rachel’s is open until 4 a.m. daily! Call 631-583-9552 for more details.

The Rings
Family-owned Gemaginations Jewelry in Brightwaters will work tirelessly with couples to ensure absolute satisfaction when it comes to engagement rings and wedding bands. With highly skilled craftsmen on staff and over 25 years of experience, owner Vita Mazza and her associates will sit down with clients and discuss their exact wants and needs to create their perfect ring or band. With your own personal preferences, along with great attention to detail, Gemaginations will produce a one-of-a-kind ring bound to make your special day as unique as your relationship. To discuss creating your dream ring, call 631-666-4181.

Op-Ed: The Vaccine Every 11-year-old Needs Now
By Michael B Grosso, MD, FAAP

Most readers are aware that a public health emergency, unimaginable 20 years ago, is now unfolding in the United States as cases of measles spread across under-immunized populations on both coasts and elsewhere. Fewer people know that there is another, silent epidemic happening, one that plays out in slow motion, over years. This one kills at a much higher rate than even measles and causes substantial human suffering. I refer here to potentially fatal cervical cancers and other malignancies preventable by childhood immunization against the virus known as HPV.

Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infects 79 million Americans. It is the predominant cause of cervical cancer in women, which kills over 4,200 mostly unimmunized women each year in the US. Other fatal cancers caused by the same virus affect both men and women. Immunization with two doses of HPV vaccine beginning with check-ups at age 11 is a safe and effective approach for preventing these cancers. The tragedy is that nearly 40 percent of our children go unprotected against HPV.

As with other forms of health care, social determinants matter. In the case of HPV, however, the under-immunized tend to live in affluent communities. This isn’t about lack of access; rather, the issue is lack of good information. We can probably learn something from their experience. Somehow, Australia has avoided falling prey to the myths that have fueled vaccine hesitancy and threatened the health of children in the US.

Pediatricians like myself feel sincere empathy for the plight of parents facing such a bewildering range of advice from social media, the internet and fellow parents – mixing sound fact and pure fiction. To be clear, while there are many controversies in medicine, the HPV vaccine isn’t one of them. And neither is the measles vaccine. Specialists in infectious diseases, pediatricians, family doctors, public health experts, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, World Health Organization (WHO) and others agree that these safe, well-tested vaccines are important to community health.

At Huntington Hospital, which is part of Northwell Health, we are launching an initiative, StopCancerFromHPV, to get the word out. Together with our community pediatricians, family physicians, internists, obstetricians and dentists, we will be educating our citizens, including young people and their parents, about the importance of lifelong protection against HPV. Suffolk County Legislator Bill (Doc) Spencer is an energetic partner in this work.

If we could tell every parent one thing, what would it be? “Not deciding” about the HPV vaccine at the age 11 visit is a decision, and a risky one. The vaccine works best in younger people, can be given any time after the 9th birthday, and is recommendable to start by the age of 11. Does any parent of a 25-year-old want to hear that their daughter has cervical cancer? Does any parent want to wake up at night thinking, “we shouldn’t have put off that shot?”

Dr. Michael B. Grosso is medical director at Huntington Hospital, and assistant professor of pediatrics at Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell.

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**Cartoon by Eric Pederson**

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AS YOU’VE GAZED LOVINGLY into your dog’s eyes, have you ever thought to yourself, how does my pet view the world? Ignoring any of your pet’s aspirations for world dominance, this article is going to attempt to give you some insight into your pet’s vision. In order to better understand how vision is possible in a complex organ, a review of eye origin and function is in order.

The first animals with anything resembling an eye evolved about 550 million years ago. The earliest predecessors of the eye were light sensitive proteins that could differentiate light from dark. With time, changes created a light-sensitive pit. The pit’s opening gradually narrowed so light entered through a small aperture, like a pinhole camera making “vision” a little bit sharper. Fast forward to the eyes of today, which are the result of advantageous adaptations that fit the needs of individual species.

Vision is the brain’s interpretation of light signals that are collected by the eye. There are three components to vision: color, brightness and visual acuity.

Just as a camera lens focuses light onto film, a clear structure at the front of the eye called the cornea focuses light onto the light-sensitive retina at the back of the eye. Embedded in the retina are millions of light sensitive cells that come in two main varieties: rods (motion and dim light vision) and cones (color and bright light vision.) When light is captured by the retina it triggers a chemical reaction that is then converted to an electrical signal and sent to the brain for interpretation.

Dogs have dichromatic vision (two cone types; yellow and blue.) This means that dogs see shades of yellow, blue and gray – but no reds or greens. Brightness discrimination is the ability to differentiate between various shades and is about two times worse in dogs than that of humans. When a human perceives two shades of gray a dog may only perceive one. Visual acuity is how much an eye can differentiate one object from another in terms of visual angles. A dog’s visual acuity is 4 to 8 times worse than that of humans.

Dog vision, it would seem, is far inferior to that of a human. But that is not quite accurate. Dogs possess visual adaptations that make them more efficient predators and more adapted to survive specific environmental conditions. Dogs have a rod rich retina, which enables them to have better vision in dim lighting conditions than humans. Additionally, dogs possess a greater ability to detect motion and shapes, which is another feature of a rod dominant retina. What dogs lack in bright light vision, they make up for in dim lighting, which has enabled them to thrive in dusk/dawn settings. So even though dogs don’t have the same vision that humans do, a dog’s vision is perfectly adapted to a dog’s world.

If you have concerns about your pet’s vision or any health issue, ask your family veterinarian if they may be a candidate for Specialty Medicine or Critical Care. For more information about any of our services at the Veterinary Medical Center of Long Island, please visit us on the web at www.VMCLI.com or call 631-587-0800 and speak to any of our helpful client care coordinators.
A Day in the Life of Fire Island

Reader Contributed Photographs

A “Sixish” view from Fair Harbor, courtesy of Tara Burns.

Ocean Beach Ferry Terminal Then & Now, courtesy of Alain Thomas.

Discarded back deck disco ball in Cherry Grove. (Photo by Shoshanna McCollum)

Rachelle King finds a rare piece of red sea glass!

Interested in having your photo published in A Day in the Life of Fire Island? Email us at editor@fireisland-news.com and we will consider it. Please limit submission to six images per news cycle, in jpeg format. NOTE: Any submitted drone images must comply with FAA regulations concerning their use within national park jurisdiction, while posing no risk to pedestrians, wildlife, or property in taking said image. Fire Island News reserves the right not to publish any photograph we suspect is in violation of these rules – and always be respectful of nature and the local wildlife when taking nature pictures outdoors. Thank you!
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