
WEST MIDWOOD NEWS

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Jazz on Wellington

by Kathy McDonald

On Friday, November 6, as the world waited anxiously to learn the results of the 2020 elections, West Midwood was treated to the sweet jazz sounds of neighbor Rob Garcia (drums), who was joined on his Wellington Court porch by Adam Kolker (soprano saxophone/bass clarinet), Kenny Wessel (guitar), and Kim Cass (bass). Rob has been hosting casual jam sessions on his porch with different musicians throughout the summer and early fall, and although he had played many times with each of these musicians, this group had never played together before.

The crowd who gathered on lawn chairs and neighboring porches were treated to

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The Stories Your House Could Tell

By Joe Enright

725 Rugby: On the Road to Recovery

On Tuesday morning, August 4th, Hurricane Isaias tore through West Midwood, upending trees and ripping countless limbs and branches from our stock of aging London planes. A number of cars and properties were damaged, but the hardest hit was the house at the corner of Waldorf Court and Rugby Road, which Walter and Marilyn Levin Cuff have called home for the past 40 years. Winds gusting over 80 mph toppled a tree across the street, which fell onto another, crashing it into their enclosed porch, ripping huge holes.

Then, as the rain and wind ended, Walter took a terrible fall, injuring his hip, and wound up in Lutheran Hospital.

Now, as the holidays approach, the Cuffs and their home are mending, so we thought this might be a good time to take a look back . . . way back.

In September 1904 John R. Corbin and his



architect Benjamin Driesler filed with the Buildings Department plans for a house on an empty lot at the northern corner of Waldorf Court:

“Two-story and attic frame dwelling. 24 x 33.4 ft, one family, shingle roof, steam heat, [estimated] cost \$7,000.”

In late April of 1905, the finished home, secured with a \$4,000 mortgage, was sold to newlyweds Jane Ann Jack and Arthur Leslie Sims.

It was the second marriage for Jane and Arthur but alas, regarding how these widowed

Brooklynites came to find each other, the historical record is blank. Arthur resided in a row house on Hancock Street in Bedford Stuyvesant with English immigrant parents and his two children, while Jane lived with her adopted son and Scottish mother in a brownstone on 9th Street off 7th Avenue. Jane’s father was James Jack, a prominent builder in Park Slope, who died in the same brownstone in 1902. But when Jane’s mother died in November 1909, the funeral was held at 725 Rugby Road.

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Dear Neighbors:

It goes without saying that 2020 has been an impactful year all around. We have seen and heard many of our neighbors go through their own private trials, whether via Covid-19 or other family dynamics. Together we have applauded, drummed, marched and protested -- as well as laughed and cried. Many of you have helped a neighbor in need and touched them in a positive way. Our collective experience has been a test of character and resolve, and we have not allowed the absence of community rituals to break our bonds with this special place.

We West Midwooders have something very special on our side. We live in a neighborhood that has withstood the test of time through some of the most dramatic events in modern history. To many, our homes, our neighbors, and our connection to other communities provide a source of wisdom and longevity, the foundation of our well-being. I want to believe that we will be stronger on the other side, as we hope for health, happiness, and brighter and more stable times that certainly lie ahead.

From the entire Board of the WM Community Association, we wish you and your family a very happy and safe holiday season.

— Eric Goldberg

President's Message Winter 2020

Eric Goldberg

Hello and wishing everyone a happy holiday season. In the absence of our "normal" semi-annual West Midwood Community Association general meetings and social events schedule, the association's Board provides the following report on issues of interest:



•**Flatbush Development Corp.** FDC's current president is Sal Lentini of Ditmas Park. He has expanded the Board of Directors and strengthened it with more members who have expertise in non-profit management and fundraising. FDC has continued to be aggressively involved in assisting local merchants opening and reopening strategies during the pandemic. FDC sponsored the Newkirk Avenue open streets program and assisted local restaurants in implementing sidewalk and street service. FDC regularly updates their social media and website regarding special events and promotions. FDC also worked with the PS 217 community on a peaceful Black Lives Matter walk, with support for the Newkirk Plaza Merchants Association, and they sponsor the food cart on the corner of Newkirk and Coney Island Avenues which feeds over 100 people per day. Finally, FDC has cosponsored local Covid and antibody testing.

•**Newkirk Plaza Merchants:** The merchants association held a meeting on October 8. New members include Apple Tree Gourmet cafe and Artem from the new Ol' Time Barbershop, formerly Leon's. The merchants association continues to organize, work on improvements and help businesses navigate Covid restrictions. The Board recently approved a large donation to this organization on behalf of the WMCA.

•**Cortelyou Road Merchants Association:** Along with the donation to the Newkirk Plaza Merchants Assoc., the Board also approved a large donation to the Cortelyou Road Merchants Assoc. on behalf of the WMCA.

•**The West Midwood Board's mall plantings committee** continues to ponder improvements to our Glenwood Road malls, including anticipated fresh plantings in the spring. The committee has spoken with a gardener used by the Ditmas Park community association about new and innovative planting ideas.

•**Our local elected officials** (state representatives Robert "Bobby" Carrol and Rodneyse Bichotte, State Senator Simcha Felder and congressional representative Yvette Clark) have all recently, one way or another, weathered another election season. Councilperson Farah Lewis is up for reelection next year. Congratulations to all of our elected officials, poll workers and volunteers for a well-run election.

•**Our newly assigned Neighborhood Coordination Officers** from the NYPD's 70th police precinct for Sector B are: Viodelys Brathwaite (917-864-7912) Viodelys.Brathwaite@nypd.org and Roshael Layne (929-270-7068) Roshael.layne@nypd.org

•**Postal Service Issues.** Many in our community have complained about postal service issues, and it became a hot-button topic as related to mail voting in the recent election. Over the past month, changes have been made to the nation's mail service. Without warning and perhaps as a political ploy (and/or cost saving measure), the USPS took certain steps that resulted in significant delivery delays, including the forced retirement of mail sorting machinery. Legislative and judicial bodies around the country attempted to fight back against these changes with the election looming. Those that continue to experience mail issues are encouraged to report same to Congressperson Yvette Clark's office as well as to New

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West Midwood Cooks (and Bakes!) *by Allidah Muller*

Squash and Radicchio Salad with Pecans

Serves 8-10

I discovered this salad in *Bon Appetit's* 2019 Thanksgiving issue last year, and have served it several times since. The salad dressing takes a little extra work and I always manage to get the toasted pecans a little too dark, but the effort is well worth it. I usually make extra dressing and save it for other things because it is just that good. You could also scale back the other ingredients since the number served is so big and just make the normal amount of dressing. This salad also is quite sturdy, so you could compose it and set it out for up to an hour before eating and not have to worry about things starting to wilt or go limp.

Squash

6 honeynut, 898, or delicata squash, halved, seeds removed, sliced into 1"-thick half-moons (keeping the skin on gives the squash structure when they're roasting... I suppose you could eat it, but I generally cut it off when I'm eating the salad)

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper

Vinaigrette and Assembly

1 cup pecans
1 tsp. plus ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil; plus more for drizzling
½ small shallot, finely chopped
¼ cup plus 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
2 T fresh orange juice
2 T Dijon mustard
4 tsp. pure maple syrup
Freshly ground black pepper

2 small heads of radicchio, leaves separated, torn if large
½ medium Asian pear, thinly sliced
3 oz. Parmesan, shaved
¼ cup parsley leaves
½ lemon

Squash

1. Place racks in middle and lower third of oven and set a rimmed baking sheet on each; preheat oven to 450°F. Toss squash with oil in a large bowl; season with salt

and pepper. Remove baking sheets from oven and divide squash between them, arranging in a single layer. Roast, rotating sheets halfway through, until browned and tender, 15-25 minutes. Set squash aside; reduce oven temp to 350°F.

2. Do ahead: Squash can be roasted 1 day ahead. Let cool, then transfer to an airtight container. Cover and chill. Bring to room temperature or heat slightly in the microwave before using.

Vinaigrette and Assembly

3. Toss pecans with 1 tsp. oil in a small bowl; season with salt. Toast on a rimmed baking sheet, tossing halfway through, until slightly darkened and fragrant, 8-10 minutes. Let cool, then coarsely chop. Set ½ cup of pecans aside for serving.

4. Blend shallot, orange juice, mustard, maple syrup, ¼ cup lemon juice, and remaining pecans in a blender until mostly smooth. With motor running, gradually stream in ½ cup oil and blend until emulsified and smooth. Season dressing with salt and pepper.

5. Toss radicchio and half of dressing in a large bowl to coat (bonus: use the same bowl you tossed the squash in!). Season with salt and pepper. Arrange on a platter. Toss reserved squash with remaining dressing in the same bowl to coat; season with salt and pepper. Arrange over radicchio.

6. Toss Asian pear with 1 Tbsp. lemon juice in a small bowl. Top salad with Asian pear, cheese, parsley, and reserved pecans. Squeeze juice from lemon half over and drizzle with oil; season with more salt and pepper.

7. Do ahead: Vinaigrette can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill. Bring to room temperature before using.

Guilck Family Pound Cake

The holidays this year are strange to say the least, and I'm finding that small traditions, routines, sights, smells, and even tastes are helping me feel close to my family even when we can't be together in person. This pound cake is one of those tastes. My family thinks it originated with my maternal Great-Aunt Betty, but nobody is sure where she got it from. Growing up, my



mother probably made — no exaggeration — hundreds of these cakes for various parties, bake sales and auctions, or just as gifts for folks when they needed cheering up. The smell of it baking reminds me of home, and we'll definitely be making a few this holiday season

½ lb. salted butter (2 sticks)
3 cups white sugar
6 eggs
3 cups all-purpose flour
¼ tsp. baking soda
pinch of salt (⅛ tsp.)
1 cup full fat sour cream (generous cup)
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. lemon OR almond extract (the real deal — not imitation; same for vanilla)
(There is a great divide amongst my relatives as to whether almond or lemon extract is the superior flavor. I am strongly in the almond camp, but the lemon is good too.)

Cream butter and sugar. (I have a KitchenAid stand mixer which is GREAT for this cake.) Dump in all the eggs at once and add the extracts. Combine flour, baking soda and salt, and incorporate gradually, alternating with sour cream. Pour into a well-greased and floured pan.

Bake at 325°F for 90 minutes. Check and leave in for 10 more minutes. Take out, let sit in the pan for 10

minutes, run knife around the edges and flip out. Cool completely.

Pan sidenote: my family ONLY uses a specific kind of pan for this cake (a 10" aluminum Wearever "angel food cake" pan that does not have a removable bottom, model no. 2734 in case you want to buy one on eBay, like I did). A lot of pound cakes in the South are made in this tubular-type pan. If you don't have a pan like this, you can also divide the batter between two loaf pans. But I would start checking for done-ness at 70 minutes.

Harriet Rhine's Raw Broccoli Salad (recipe from former West Midwood neighbor Sara Benjamin)



Combine the following:

Small florets of broccoli
1/3 package ramen noodles torn up
1/2 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup raisins or currants
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/2 cup plain yogurt
3 T. Vinegar
1/2 small purple onion cut up
1/2 cup cashews
salt and pepper to taste



School News — PS 217 *by Sherry Goldberg*

our own local PS 217 to say the least!

Like many schools, there are two options for learning at PS 217 this year. There is an all-remote and a "hybrid/blended" model which allows the students to have in-class learning and instruction a few days a week. With both options, there is live instruction throughout the day, providing the students with structure, interaction, warmth and strong education.

Of course, even the best laid plans aren't without hiccups. In partnership with the DOE, there is daily COVID-19 testing for those in the school building (a random sampling of students and faculty). The school has been closed twice for COVID-19 precautions. The

It has been an interesting school year across the country, in New York City and at

first time was a two-week closure when the school was in the city's identified Red Zone. So while there had been no specific cases at the school, it was closed along with all the other schools in the area. The school did a great job pivoting to all remote learning immediately and the school's communication to families was swift and supportive. The second time was when there was an identified COVID-19 case in the school. The city's Situation Room lead the investigation, which was supplemented with speed and diligence from the school leadership. Those in the impacted classrooms were notified immediately and the school was able to re-open after two days and by following all processes and procedures.

This has certainly been a big adjustment and a year for the books! Cheers to all the educators, parents, kids and families taking on this unprecedented school year.

The Mad Gardener

Gardening Books Make Excellent Holiday Gifts

New books on gardening come out each year, and some are quite expensive. One series, however, is both very good and remarkably inexpensive. Timber Press has a Plant Lovers series of very affordable books (under \$25), each focusing on specific plants. *The Plant Lover's Guide to Magnolias* is especially spectacular, as also is *The Plant Lover's Guide to Clematis*. These books show the flowers of many different varieties in closeup photos, so that one can carefully compare. Each book is by a different expert. There are also *Plant Lover's Guides* to ferns, salvia, geraniums, asters, sedum, tulips, and *epimedium*.

New is not always best. In many book categories, a book even one or two years old is today of little interest. (Think generally of politics, the coronavirus pandemic, global warming, Donald Trump's plans for a second term, etc.) A wonderful thing about gardening books is that many quite old books, still available for sale, are much better than most new books. Here are some excellent old books: *The Complete Shade Gardener* (Schenk, 2002, Timber Press) is arguably the best book ever written on gardening in shade. *Hardy Bulbs*, written back in 1936, is still a joy to read (Wilder, 1974, Dover). *The Little Bulbs* by Lawrence is also a classic (1986, Duke University Press.) A handsome coffee table book, with dazzling photos of fabulous gardens is *The Collector's Garden: Designing with Extraordinary Plants* (Druse, 2004, Timber Press). The new idea of pruning perennials, so as to delay or extend their bloom, is perfected in *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden*, by Tracy DiSabato-Aust (1998, Timber Press). I enjoy and often reread the articles in Henry Mitchell's *The Essential Earthman* (1981, Indiana University Press), which are both funny and educational. And why not enjoy the most famous and celebrated of all garden writers, Vita Sackville-West? Her delightful and erudite gardening columns were a sensation in England, and are collected in *V. Sackville-West's Garden Book* (1968, Atheneum).

What Tree Will Soon Burst into Bloom?

In mid-November, when all the leaves have fallen, and the blooming season appears to be over, the Japanese autumn cherry (*Prunus subhirtella 'Autumnalis'*) suddenly blooms in profusion. Its flowers are small, but can number in the hundreds. And as a bonus, it will bloom sporadically all winter,

and then profusely again in early spring, before any other trees. Witch hazels (*Hamamelis*) and a few very early

bulbs (e.g., snowdrops) will also be in bloom, but these are much smaller, while the autumn cherry can reach 20–30 feet.

Gardening Challenges in Brooklyn

Our beautiful neighborhood of West Midwood is far from perfect for landscape gardening, as anyone who has attempted it will agree. Beneath the first inch or so, the soil is hard-packed clay, mixed with rocks, construction rubble, broken glass, etc. There are no top-quality nurseries anywhere closer than Westchester County. Skilled help here is difficult to find, and expensive. The biggest obstacle however is that most of us must live in the shade, with our many large shade trees, and our attractive three-story homes. Most home owners are starved for the long hours of bright sunlight that so many good plants crave. Therefore, shade will be an unfortunate theme of this column.

Foliage Plants for Shade. Many plants can survive in shade, but only a few are exceptionally attractive. Ferns come quickly to mind, and there are at least 50 good species to choose among. My favorite, however, is the Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), because it is evergreen, still a rich and healthy green in December, with snow all around it. An increasingly popular plant for shade is moss, which was often in the past seen as an invasive weed, to be eradicated. However, a well-tended area of smooth, velvety green can be spectacular. In Japan there are entire famous gardens devoted entirely to beautiful soft green mosses. An inspirational book on this plant is *The Magical World of Moss Gardening* (Martin, 2015, Timber Press). One can order dozens of varieties by mail, but if moss already exists in your yard, you can simply transplant and propagate it for no cost at all.

Other foliage plants for shade include mondo grass, European ginger, and English ivy, but these are all far less exciting than mosses or ferns.

Flowering Plants for Shade. Most flowering plants will not bloom, or even survive, in shade. The top choice, by far, is plastic roses! These artificial plants are bright and colorful even in winter, and will last for years. However, good plastic roses are now becoming hard to find. Most artificial roses are now made from silk or other frail fabrics, and will not hold up for even one winter. Yes, there are a few genuine plants that will bloom in shade, such as impatiens. But the flowers are small, and many of the colors are terribly garish.

If We Only Had Lots of Sun . . .

Few of us in West Midwood have any garden areas with six daily hours of bright sun, but for those lucky few, some of the very finest plants are the following:



Roses. Most roses are not winter hardy, and they attract many insects (including Japanese beetles) and diseases. Nonetheless, they are among the most loved of all flowers. Local nurseries carry some, but catalogs (e.g., EdmundsRoses.com) offer hundreds of beautiful choices. My favorite red rose is ‘Papa Meilland,’ which is a deep dark velvety red, and intensely fragrant. A very fine pink rose is ‘Queen Elizabeth,’ only slightly fragrant, but tough as nails, and it can survive our cold winters quite well. Other excellent roses are ‘Sweet Surrender,’ ‘Bewitched,’ ‘Peace,’ ‘First Prize,’ ‘Red Devil,’ ‘Chrysler Imperial,’ ‘Garden Party,’ and ‘Iceberg.’

Peonies are much larger than and equally as beautiful as roses, with a wide range of colors and shapes. Most require full sun (sigh), but the shrub (aka, tree) peonies do well and bloom in light shade. These outstanding plants can live for 200 years or more (which we probably will not), so plant them carefully. ‘Garden Treasure’ and ‘Seven Dragons’ are two excellent choices. Peonies can be expensive (I wish for a six-year-old spectacular ‘Joseph Rock,’ for \$600) but many other very good ones are only about \$30.

Clematis are known as the “Queen of Vines,” with big flowers up to 10 inches wide, in red, white, pink, purple, orange, and even blue, the rarest of colors in the garden. Actually, ‘Daniel Deronda’ and ‘Will Goodwin’ are almost blue (though neither cannot quite match the stunning color of ‘Heavenly Blue’ morning glories.)

Lilies, until just a few years ago, were very troublesome and fussy, requiring soft, almost fluffy humus soil, consistent moisture, and they often died in the winter. But today there are hybrid Asian lilies, (called *Orienpets* in some catalogs), which have huge flowers, survive even the coldest winters, and grow up to eight feet tall, in clumps that become larger every year.

There are innumerable other excellent flowers, that all require full sun, but why bother to mention them, when so few West Midwood yards have much sun.

Enjoy Our Beautiful Old Sycamore Trees

You may have noticed that some of West Midwood’s huge old sycamore trees (*Platanus occidentalis*, aka London plane) have been falling down now every year, often causing considerable damage. It’s the mottled bark of these trees (favorites of Thomas Jefferson) that is so special, and is especially visible and beautiful in the wintertime. Let’s enjoy them while we still can, because they will not be replaced in any numbers. Gardeners now know that a grove of trees, all of the same species, is vulnerable to diseases and pests.

The Worst Plants to Have!

Poison ivy is an obvious leader in this category, as is running bamboo, which spreads uncontrollably underground, and can never be eradicated. It is safe only if surrounded on all sides by concrete, such as in some of our sidewalk strips. The undesirable plants most often seen around here are those with no flowers and many sharp thorns. Barberry bushes are the most prevalent of those. An interesting and amusing book is *Nature’s Outcasts: A New Look at Living Things We Love to Hate* (Kennedy, 1993, Storey Communications). It covers insects, mammals, and other annoying pests as well as plants.

A category of bad-choice plants, in my opinion, with which some residents will strongly disagree, is vegetables and fruits. Most such edibles grow on very large and very ugly plants that attract countless insects and many diseases. If one lives in a remote area, and needs these to have enough to eat, that’s a different story. New York however has many sources of high-quality vegetables and fruits, available year round. Sure, homegrown tomatoes can be delicious, but one can spend hundreds of dollars, and many long hours of work, and be lucky to get two or three tomatoes. (I speak from experience.) If one sticks to salad greens and a few herbs, that’s fine, but don’t even dream of growing raspberries, eggplants, or watermelons.

Neighborhood News

What’s Happening in Your Life? Let Us Know!

Let West Midwood News readers know about significant events in your life — a birth or a loss, a graduation, an engagement or a marriage, an anniversary, an honor or a promotion. Write editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com.

James Rohrbach and **Lissy DeSantis** just moved to Rugby Road from Park Slope, along with Pete (age 3.5) and Sam (almost 2). They were looking for more space and a more diverse and vibrant community, and they fell in love with the architecture and vibe of the Ditmas Park area. Lissy works at the Clinton Foundation. James is a tech entrepreneur and real estate investor. They try to have frequent family adventures exploring far-flung places and activities across New York, and they are big art and museum people. They look forward to spending a lot of their free time in their new neighborhood, getting to know and contributing to the community. They are so happy to be here and already feel very much at home!

Mazel Tov!

Marilyn and Ed Rothstein are pleased to report that on October 13th, their daughter Dena and husband Jason welcomed newborn daughter Maya into the world, crazy as it is. Maya joins siblings Sharit and Noam.

Tonya and Sebastian Coss have a new baby boy, Henry Ellis Coss, who was born on July 28th. His big brother William marvels at all of his cute little features and is extremely tolerant of all his crying.

Madi and Steve Appell celebrated their 50th anniversary on Thanksgiving Day, November 26. They were married on a balmy Thanksgiving Day in 1970 at La Met Caterers on Ocean Parkway.

Florence and Arjun Manglani celebrated their 49th anniversary on Friday, December 4

PUZZLE

On the basis of daily traffic reports during the COVID-19 pandemic, it seems that there are as many incidents as before the pandemic. We see lots of cars drive by with their brand names or logos or both adorning the vehicles, but which companies actually own those brand names? Below is a list of car brands followed by a list of their parent companies. There are more brand names listed than companies because some companies own more than one brand name. How many brand names can you correctly match with their owners?

Rating: 7=good; 14=excellent; 20=genius

List of Car Brands

1. Acura
2. Alfa Romero
3. Audi
4. Buick
5. Cadillac
6. Chevrolet
7. Dodge
8. Genesis
9. Infiniti
10. Jaguar
11. Jeep
12. Kia
13. Land Rover
14. Lexus
15. Lincoln
16. Maserati

17. Mercedes-Benz
18. Porsche
19. Ram
20. Volvo

List of Companies

- a. Daimler AG
 - b. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles
 - c. Ford Motor Company
 - d. General Motors
 - e. Honda Motor Company
 - f. Hyundai Motor Group
 - g. Renault-Nissan-Corporation
 - h. Tata Motors
 - i. Toyota Motor Corporation
 - j. Volkswagen Group
 - k. Zhejiang Geely Holding Group
-

Frances Leona Dunston

Fran Dunston will be remembered by her neighbors on DeKoven Court and elsewhere in West Midwood for her strong, healing hands as a massage therapist and her warm and generous ways—whether it was showing up with soothing herbal teas and advice about relaxation for someone who was feeling stressed; accompanying someone else on daily physical therapy walks after knee surgery with distracting conversation and encouragement; or sharing her positive healing techniques with someone who was also experiencing a serious illness. She will be missed.

The following notice was written by Naomi and Jeffrey Dunston.

Our West Midwood community has lost one of its finest community members, our beloved Frances L. Dunston. Frances's creativity, passion, and community spirit led to her establishing several home-based businesses by becoming a certified daycare provider and starting Leona Herniece, where she handmade scented soaps and essential oils. As a licensed massage therapist and certified herbalist, her Fusion Therapy Spa represented her life's passion and cultural beliefs for physical and spiritual healing. Frances cared deeply for her clients and her friends.

She transitioned on October 26, 2020, after a lengthy battle with cancer, a battle she fought with great courage and positivity. Frances is survived by her husband, Jeffrey Dunston, and five loving children—Christopher Lewis and wife Michelle, Andrew, Naomi, Anthony, and Cynthia and husband Nicholas Collazo. She will be missed by her grandchildren Mila, Benedict, and Samuel; her mother, Marilyn Elcock; and siblings Jae Edman and Tina Marie; and many loving family members, neighbors, and friends.

The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to: The Tisch Cancer Institute at Mount Sinai, in recognition of Frances Leona Dunston | <https://giving.mountsinai.org/site/Donation2>

The Stories Your House Could Tell — Continued from page 1

Arthur Sims was a stereotyper for a daily newspaper, creating reusable printing slabs. It was noisy, messy, time-sensitive work and Arthur was in the thick of it as a proud member of Stereotypers Union No. 1. Active in his Masonic Lodge, Arthur was also a veteran of the old volunteer fire service that served Brooklyn in the 1890s.

Apparently the Sims did not want for money. Arthur bought a Cadillac in 1913 for \$1,800 (the equivalent of \$47,000 today), one of the first cars to feature a crankless electric starter. Meanwhile, Jane Sims often entertained on Rugby Road and led the Ladies Guild of St. Simon's Episcopal Church at Avenue K and East 11th Street. But in 1916 Arthur took ill and was no longer able to work. The Sims rented out their home and moved to an apartment on 8th Avenue in Park Slope, where Arthur passed away in February of 1918. The twice widowed Jane went to work as a dry goods saleslady and eventually joined Arthur in the hereafter 13 years later (they are buried in Section 205 of Green-Wood Cemetery).

After the Sims departed, the house was rented to Harold Morton Halstead, a 35-year-old building materials merchant, whose wife Florence gave birth to a baby girl in the home in April 1919. But within months the Halsteads had moved to another rental in Fiske Terrace. They were immediately replaced by Edward Bourne and his wife Rowena Eakin, along with their two young daughters. Edward was a fire insurance manager in New Orleans and may have gotten a lead on the rental at 725 Rugby from Frederick Speckels of 15 Waldorf Court, who also worked in fire insurance as a statistician. But by the mid-1920s the Bournes returned to New Orleans, displaced by the sale of the house to John Edward Madden, possibly the richest person ever to own property in West Midwood.

Madden was the son of immigrants from Ireland's County Roscommon who had settled in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. When his father died unexpectedly, young John went to work in the steel mills and then boxed his way to paydays that kept the Madden family afloat. John Madden would later become the most successful breeder of thoroughbred racing horses in America, including five Kentucky Derby and four Belmont Stakes winners, and he remains the only person to be inducted into both the Harness and Thoroughbred Halls of Fame. In 1903 it was reported that Madden was "the only millionaire breeder who trains, develops, and races his own horses."

Why did John Madden buy 725 Rugby Road? Because his recently separated sister, Mary McTernan, and her two daughters—Catherine and Cecilia—needed help. The

McTernan family moved to Cobble Hill from Bethlehem shortly after the turn of the century and were still living in a brownstone apartment at 301 Clinton Street as of the 1920 Census. Soon thereafter Mary and Michael McTernan (who was frequently unemployed and provided five different birthdates to Census takers) went their separate ways.



It was at this time that John Madden's largesse enabled his sister to escape with her daughters to 725 Rugby Road. Mary died there on September 7, 1929, and the death certificate listed her as a widow when in fact her husband would live in a Cypress Hills apartment until his death in 1948. Two months after Mary's passing, John took gravely ill himself with pneumonia in the Pennsylvania Hotel and died of a heart attack while being cared for by his nieces. The McTernan sisters claimed to the press covering his funeral at St. Patrick's

Cathedral that he died of a broken heart over the loss of their mother Mary.

At his passing John's estate was valued at nearly \$10 million. According to some old papers dating to the 1930s found in the Cuffs' basement, Catherine appeared to be the recipient of a trust fund which paid her \$5,000 annually—which would be about \$85,000 today. In fact, John Madden's will, filed for probate in Lexington, Kentucky in January 1931, provided a trust of \$125,000 for Catherine and Cecilia.



John Madden in 1900

Catherine was never employed, but "Cecile," as she preferred to be called, a graduate of Mount St. Vincent College in Westchester, worked most of her life as a public school teacher in Brooklyn grammar schools. But it was obvious the McTernans were loaded. During Easter and Summer breaks in 1931 and 1932, Catherine and Cecilia took Caribbean and European cruises, registering at the Brooklyn Eagle's Paris Bureau each year. In November 1933, the sisters took a month long cruise to Hawaii via San Francisco. The following August they took a transatlantic cruise, returning from Genoa, Italy. Another trip, to Greece, ensued in 1935. And the following spring they visited their rich uncle in Kentucky.

By the 1940 Census, as a result of the Great Depression, the value of the McTernans' house had nosedived to \$14,500 from its 1930-estimated value of

The house in 1940



\$21,000. And Cecile continued to teach, earning \$3,390 for the 40 weeks she worked in 1939. It should also be noted that the McTernan sisters were very generous souls. They contributed annually to Cecile's alma mater and to Our Lady of Refuge Church on Ocean Avenue,

hosting semi-annual fund raising events as well. They were also socially active in Breezy Point where they rented a cabana for many years.

On April 1, 1980, Cecile McTernan died, and come the new year, Catherine sold the house to Walter and Marilyn for \$61,500. The Cuffs were then residing with their newborn son Justin (now a pathologist in San Francisco), in a brownstone investment property they owned on Lincoln Place in Park Slope. Their daughter Andrea (now a nurse practitioner in the Arizona Navajo Nation), would arrive shortly thereafter. At the time, Walter, who had been teaching in East New York for 15 years, was attending Brooklyn Law School at night. He would start his new legal career the next year, while Marilyn, a Midwood native and an administrator at a Montessori School, would soon embark on a life in nursing.

Then in 1985 the ghost of John Madden descended on the Cuffs. Apparently the title search five years earlier

had failed to find the 1920s document naming Madden as a beneficial owner of the McTernans' home. A lawsuit ensued demanding reparations for the gazillionaire's estate. Oy vey! Thankfully, Walter's law firm was steeped in realty law and sanity prevailed. If nothing else the episode explained why the McTernans' upstairs bedroom was covered with wallpaper featuring lots of horses.

Looking back, the Cuffs' best memories of life in West Midwood revolve around neighbors. Many have come and gone since 1981, but the latest crop suits the Cuffs just fine. Marilyn recalled the support they received during and after the August storm, noting as just one example how Anthony Finkel instantly responded, placing a tarp over their porch that prevented water damage. "There are so many people living here who care and are helping others," said Marilyn. "We were so fortunate to raise our children here," echoed Walter.

Indeed the rest of us have been equally fortunate to count the Cuffs as our neighbors and friends —while America has benefitted from their children's lives of service.



Walter and Marilyn Cuff

Jazz on Wellington *continued from page 1*

many standard tunes from the Great American Songbook and original songs by famous jazz musicians. Songs that evening included, "When Will the Blues Leave," by Ornette Coleman, "Nardis," by Miles Davis, "Long Ago and Far Away," by Jerome Kern, "St. Thomas," by Sonny Rollins, "Straight No Chaser," by Thelonius Monk, and "Alfie," by Burt Bacharach.

Asked about the porch jam sessions he has been organizing during the COVID-19 pandemic, Rob said, "It's wonderful and I feel extremely lucky to have a porch to play music on during this time of COVID, with the need for gatherings to be outdoors to stay safe. I've enjoyed many joyous reunions with my musician friends who I normally see fairly often on gigs and jam sessions. It's nice to have neighbors and passers-by stop and listen. We feel the energy and support."

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected the livelihood of all musicians, who rely on performing for live audiences. However, most concert venues and clubs have been shut down, with only a small fraction of indoor clubs being able to host performances with 25% capacity. Rob was able to do several outdoor concerts during the warm weather, but with winter right around the corner, no



organized or funded performances are on the horizon. As he reminds us, "Musicians' incomes have been extremely compromised and unfortunately, NYC has not come up with a plan to take care of its live performers, the people that contribute so much to NYC culture and appeal."

But for one last night, at least for awhile, Rob and his fellow performers were able to share their music and bring West Midwood together with beautiful music on a lovely fall evening.

Who You Gonna Call?

When you need help, it's important to call the right number. Here's a list of useful phone numbers with an explanation of when to call which number. It's not a bad idea to cut out this list and stick in on your refrigerator or by your phone.

911—The number to call for emergencies, such as fire, medical emergencies, accidents of any type, a crime in progress, violent behavior, or a person in trouble. Remember to stay on the line until the operator tells you it is okay to hang up. The operator will also ask you your location, so note the nearest house number and street address.

311 — Call this number for non-emergencies such as noise complaints, animal control, air quality, blocked driveway, dangerous tree situation, or to find out where to get other information. For a complete list, see www.nyc.gov/311.

If you're unsure, call 911. The operator will either take your information or redirect you to 311. Remember to get a complaint number and write it down.

Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs):

P.O. Viodelys Brathwaite (917-864-7912)

Viodelys.Brathwaite@nypd.org

P.O. Roshael Layne (929-270-7068)

Roshael.layne@nypd.org

The NCOs are usually on duty Tuesdays to Saturdays from noon to 6:30 p.m. (Sometimes they are unavailable because they have been pulled for training or special duty.) Former West Midwood president Linda Howell reports that she relies on the NCOs for quality-of-life issues, especially situations “where I do not have complete details, only secondhand reports of events. I feel comfortable giving them as much information as I can and asking them to check into the potential problem.” Examples include gatherings at the dead ends, abandoned cars, chronic parking violations, and patterns of package theft from porches. You can also contact them if you feel a 911 or 311 call was not handled correctly. Note that while they will make every effort to assist, they may also be handling other more time-critical issues.

Community Board 14 (CB14), 718-859-6357

This office and its staff are a valuable resource that can be contacted for a myriad of situations. Call them to find out the status of a 311 complaint, why your recycling wasn't picked up, how you can get a tree planted in front of your home or a dead one removed, or what's going on with construction (or lack of it) at a specific location. They can also help you get in touch with the local representative for a specific city agency. This is by no means a complete list. If you're unsure of how to handle an issue, call them and ask. They are there to help.

For Information About Covid-19:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page>

Artist's Notebook:

Florence Mangani



Advertisements

Mario Catanzaro

No Victorian house, like those in our neighborhood, should be without an antique clock. Whether it be mantle, wall, shelf, or grandfather clock, or something more modern like an early electric clock, I can probably help. If interested, call me at (718) 282-8471.

Park Slope Copy Center

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Box Tops For Education

by Sherry Goldberg

Please help P.S. 217 raise money by clipping Box Tops for Education! Our school receives 10 cents for every single box top we submit, and the funds add up quickly! It's simple: keep an eye out for the Box Tops for Education logo

(shown above) on the products you use every day. Participating product lines include major brands such as General Mills, Green Giant, Pillsbury, Old El Paso, Ziploc, Hefty, Betty Crocker, and many more. Simply contact me at sherrymgoldberg@gmail.com. I would be happy to pick up box tops or coordinate a drop off.



Mark Your Calendars!

Hanukkah -- December 10-18

Christmas Eve -- December 24

Christmas Day -- December 25

Kwanzaa -- December 26

New Year's Day -- January 1

Martin Luther King Day-- January 18

Groundhog's Day -- February 2

What Is West Midwood Online?

Want to ask folks in the neighborhood whether they have any recommendations for a plumber or roofer or such? Or maybe what local eateries or merchants they like? Perhaps you'd like to be in the know about issues affecting our area? Then join the West Midwood Online email discussion group, aka the listserv.

Send an email to joe@enright.com with your street address, name, and the email address that you want to use to post and receive messages. He will add you to the group and send you the simple instructions. There are presently over 200 email subscribers representing about 125 households.

To join you must be a permanent resident of West Midwood and agree not to post messages of a religious, political, or spam nature. Insulting or crude language can also lead to revocation of the ability to post. Finally, new and existing members can also request a daily recap containing all of the activity within the previous 24

**Would you like to advertise your
Brooklyn-based business in this space?
For the bargain price of \$50 per year, you can be
included in all four issues of the *West Midwood News*.
Please contact Joe Mislowack at
jmislowack@gmail.com
to make payment and submit your copy.**



In early November, all the West Midwood street trees got a long overdue haircut. Noisy, but so worth it!

Neighbors' Businesses and Services

To add, cancel, or update a listing, contact Ellen Bilofsky at ebb11@optonline.net.

Babysitting

Griffin Umrigar Laguardia Arts High School student, available for babysitting. Creative, in the neighborhood and many references available! Please contact me at 917-244-9978.

Education and Lessons

Danielle Buonaiuto Private voice lessons for high-school age and adult students in classical, musical theatre, and pop styles. Master of Music from Peabody Conservatory, and 10+ years' teaching experience. danielle.buonaiuto@gmail.com.

Rob Garcia Drum lessons. I've been teaching private lessons to students of all ages for the past 25 years, and I have a great teaching studio in my home at 34 Wellington Ct. For more info about lessons, see <http://www.robgarciamusic.com/notepad.php> Contact me at robjgarcia@hotmail.com.

Udi Hazan Private table tennis and archery lessons. Certified coach - level 1 in ping pong and level 2 in recurve bow archery. 718-859-8432

Florence Manglani Semi-retired bilingual school psychologist, still teaching at Brooklyn College, is available for consultations. 718-434-2134

Julian Rhine Guitar lessons. BA in music and English from Vanderbilt University. 917-981-0675

Melissa Scott Yoga for Every Body! Currently offering private or small class instruction. 718-781-6509; kettleandkame@gmail.com.

Amy Rowe Tutoring in math, reading, writing, ESL, test prep, and other subjects. All ages, all levels welcome. Experienced education program leader, researcher, teacher, tutor, writer, and editor can help make learning fast and fun. amyrowe.nyc@gmail.com; 917-723-0348

David Wechsler Flute lessons. Long-time member of Brooklyn Philharmonic and many years of experience teaching at all levels. 347-528-6318



Health and Mental Health

Laura Campbell-Lui Shaklee Distributor household cleaning products; nutritional skin care; nutritional supplement products; appointments available. 917-767-3579; lauraclui@yahoo.com.

Jan Castro Custom Thai bodywork and Swedish, sports, and myofascial massage: 60–120-minute sessions. Reasonable rates. Great birthday or special occasion gift. jancastro1@gmail.com or 314-323-9060. Please call two or more days in advance.

Andrea Freshman, LCSW Specialty: trauma healing with emphasis on integrating the mind-body connection. 718-434-6873.

Pet Sitting

Neil Mendlinger and Lauren Sullivan, Owners, Abby on Argyle Pet Sitting & Dog Walking, LLC. Available 365 days a year for your pets. Bonded and insured, and all staff members trained in Pet First Aid and CPR. Member of Pet Sitters International and an eco-friendly company. www.AbbyOnArgyle.com.

Real Estate

Miriam Hurwitz Associate real estate broker with Douglas Elliman on Cortelyou Road. 917-589-6717.

Ester Sciallo Brooklyn residential real estate. Office: 718-676-1755; cell: 646-389-6248; es@brres.com



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