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IQ & A: Chuck Lesnick,
Yonkers City Council President

By Jeanne Zaino,
Ph.D.

Q – I wanted to ask you first about the public hearing Tuesday night... and where we are on the issue of the Landmarks [Preservation] Board at this point?
A – There were probably about a hundred people at the hearing, half of whom spoke at the public hearing, and with the exception of the Mayor Amicone’s letter in support of the Charter change, every other speaker was opposed to it. Most of the people were big fans of land marking, both for the cultural and aesthetic reasons, but also because of the economic development reasons to support land marking. Some speakers, including myself, pointed out that Governor Paterson had just signed legislation to expand the state historic

see IQ & A Pg. 11

High Density Buildings
on North Avenue in New Rochelle Possible

By Peggy Godfrey

Ten story buildings are still under consideration by the New Rochelle City Council for North Avenue under a rezoning proposal.

In February 2008 a study by AKRF had originally proposed the need for building a deck on the City Hall parking lot and re-timing all the traffic lights on North Avenue to accommodate this rezoning. At that time two twelve story towers were proposed with a middle section of eight stories.

A revised new proposal on high density zoning will be presented to New Rochelle.
would cause the room to be ditched for the hot and dank Ceremonial Courtroom whose upright fans and open windows permitted the noise level to reach such high decibel levels that almost all would question whether their hearing ability had waned. Be assured it did not. No one could hear well. That is the norm. The Public Hearing was also not televised, as is always promised, but rarely is. Still the civic minded lot of them stayed the course to speak their mind; all 60 of them. They had no microphones to override the noises that would attempt to silence them . As acid-tongued bloggers advised, almost every person in attendance spoke against changing the Yonkers City Charter from its present delineation. The concern was that the proposed change would neuter the “powers and duties” of the Landmarks Preservation Board and permit the Planning Board to eclipse it.

Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone’s position was contrary to all those that attended last week’s Public Hearing. The mayor’s position is clearly reiterated over the next five short paragraphs. After reading his position, we can get to the next stage of the process.

Yonkers Mayor Phil Amicone requested his position concerning the “powers and duties” of the Landmarks Preservation Board be read into the Public Hearing record by a Charter Revision Board Member. Aileen Flath complied as follows:

“Contrary to recent media reports that have been spurred on by political pandering, the proposed City Charter change concerning the powers and duties of the Landmarks Preservation Board does not only have merit, but is in keeping with the spirit, intent and letter of our City Charter. This proposal is endorsed by the Yonkers Charter Revision Commission and approved by the voters of our City in November, would accomplish two important things. First, it would require that the Yonkers Planning Board perform a final review to all landmark designations. As with the current process, when landmarking is recommended, the City Council would still retain the power to make a timely determination regarding whether or not a structure should be landmarked or whether or not a given area should be made a Historic District.

“Secondly, the Planning Board would assume the appeals process responsibility with regard to any certificate of appropriateness that has been disapproved by the Landmarks Preservation Board.

“Contrary to reports and speculation this proposed change was not made in a vacuum or to merely diminish the responsibility or importance of the Landmarks Preservation Board. In fact, this proposal was made to realign the landmarks review process and properly assign a final review of these important landmark use issues to the Planning Board - the City Board that has the overall responsibility for land use actions pursuant to our City Charter.

“In addition, it is worth mentioning that December 2, 2008, the City Council has created a near-paralysis on the Landmarks Preservation Board appointments ‘hostage.’ The Council’s failure to provide its approval or consent to their respective appointments as required by Section 15-3-B of the Yonkers City Code has caused the Landmarks Preservation Board to operate only with a limited number and caused several of their scheduled meetings to be canceled due to a lack of a quorum.”

Now you know Mayor Amicone’s position succinctly! If one were to believe the acid-tongued bloggers, and I do, you could count almost 60 people opposed to Mayor Amicone’s position. No matter what, the proposed legislation can be moved forward, dismissing the 60 citizens who spoke against the proposal, and placing the legislation as referenda in the November ballot. This is an election year. Some candidates vying for voter attention and approval might have something to say about this subject matter now, while others later. The People need to know now, and certainly prior to the next Public Hearing to be held on Wednesday, August 12, 2009.

An acid-tongued blogger suggested a poll be conducted. I concurred. Since not all candidates have shared their email contactwithourpublication, and not every Yonkers City Councilmember may necessarily be reachable by telephone, text, email, etc., by the deadline demanded in responding to this issue, this inquiry will be made public and open to all, allowing every “voter” to be made aware of the need for their vote being cast.

So let’s hear from all of them. Not a select few. Everyone. No one will earn a “Free Get out of Jail” card for not playing; you are not making the rules, the acid-tongued bloggers are. Every position will be given notice. It’s simple, too. It’s only, “Yes,” or “No!” If you must, a dissertation of your position will be tolerated, but is not being solicited. In truth, it’s simply, “Yes!,” or “No!” The reason for that is because if the proposed legislation does get placed on the ballot, evidently against the wishes of 60 citizens, the public will be asked only to respond with a “Yes!,” or “No!” What’s good for the Public should be good enough for those who wish to represent the Public.

Those who want a change, as Mayor Amicone has, must vote “Yes!” those opposed would need to vote “No!”

Those eligible to vote now are:

City Council President
Chuck Lesnick

City Council President
Candidate Jim
Castro-Blanco

6th District-
Councilmember Dee
Barbato

6th District
Councilmember candidate
John Larkin

6th District
Councilmember candidate
Anthony Merante

5th District
Councilmember candidate
Ted Winnicki

5th District
Councilmember John
Murtagh

4th District Minority
Leader Liam McLaughlin

see The Hezitorial Pg. 3
Recognizing Craniosynostosis Leads to Healthy Child Development

New York, NY — On Thursday, September 24, from 12:00 Noon – 1:00 p.m., former Radio City Rockette Mary Six, who performed with the famous dance troupe for 13 years, will be giving a free dance lesson at the Time / Warner Building. Participates will get to learn such signature Rockette moves (e.g., the famous Toy Soldier fall) . The lesson is part of the “Get A Kick Out Of Life” campaign, a public education to teach those with creaky joints how to control of their life and resume doing the things they love.

The field of medicine has seen more advancement and discovery in the last half-century than in all the previous years of medical science. Yet there are still disorders that remain challenging to medical professionals and that prove vexing to trained specialists. Education, experience and understanding are key to unlocking the obstacles to correctly identifying a disorder — and putting the patient on the path to full recovery.

A case in point is Craniosynostosis, a medical condition that may affect up to one in every 2,000 births. Craniosynostosis occurs when the sutures between the sections of bone in the skull of a newborn fuse prematurely. This can inhibit normal growth of the skull and result in anything from a misshaped head and protruding or misaligned eyes, to more serious problems like increased pressure on the brain or an obstructed airway. Pressure on the developing brain can lead to inhibited intellectual growth, seizures, and to a range of problems affecting cognitive development. In addition, children with undiagnosed Craniosynostosis may develop misalignment of the spine, torticollis or wryneck, and any of a number of other physical abnormalities that may grow more severe and even life-threatening over time.

According to David A. Staffenberg, MD, DSc Chief of Plastic Surgery at Montefiore Medical Center and Surgical Director of the Center for Craniofacial Disorders at The Children’s Hospital at Montefiore in The Bronx, New York (www.montekids.org), the incidence of Craniosynostosis might be more common than originally believed. This, he feels, is due to under-diagnosis on the part of doctors and other health professionals, stemming from a lack of awareness of the signs and symptoms of the syndrome. The problem may be rooted in the fact that one kind of Craniosynostosis may be mistaken as deformational plagiocephaly which is very common in newborn babies. This common disorder and coronal Craniosynostosis both include flattening on one side of the head but the latter tends to improve on its own. By the time a baby is noted to be worsening, a critical amount of time may have passed. It is crucial that we increase awareness within the medical community in detecting Craniosynostosis early and taking remedial action, most often in the form of surgery.

“We’ve begun to think that Craniosynostosis might be more common than we thought,” Dr. Staffenberg explains. “If a baby develops a problem that doesn’t cause them to be obviously sick or to be rushed to the emergency room, it can be missed. And with no reliable blood test, the diagnosis is perhaps more difficult for a doctor to make.” We have found that parents feel that something is wrong with their baby’s head, but finding information and guidance is a challenge. The situation is worsened when they are told that the problem is ‘just cosmetic’.”

Therein lay the importance of educating the medical profession about Craniosynostosis, its symptoms and the ramifications if gone untreated. The benign abnormality known as “bed head” that occurs with some infants and that usually corrects itself is often the culprit in physicians’ overlooking Craniosynostasis as the correct diagnosis. “Parents talk about the ‘funny head’ that gets better with time and that, in most cases, is not Craniosynostosis,” Dr. Staffenberg says. “But if that one baby does have Craniosynostosis and is not diagnosed, then they have a problem. Like a ripple in a pond, the issues grow over time. Timing of surgery may be crucial.”

As part of his mission Dr. Staffenberg works closely with The Jorge Posada Foundation, www.jorgeposadafoundation.org established by New York Yankees’ All-Star catcher Jorge Posada and his wife, Laura. Their son was born with Craniosynostosis and the foundation has raised funds for and awareness about the syndrome, helping families affected by Craniosynostosis. Dr.

see Recognizing Pg. 4
Recognizing Craniosynostosis Leads to Healthy Child Development

From Page 3

Staffenberg is also working on a poster that will be disseminated throughout the medical community to educate physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals about detecting the syndrome and acting quickly to eradicate it. The poster is being distributed first to medical professionals in Florida.

In the end, understanding Craniosynostosis is key to helping families avoid the physical disabilities and emotional trauma that can evolve when the syndrome goes undiagnosed and untreated. Dr. Staffenberg asserts that he is committed to disseminating awareness about Craniosynostosis, and allowing children to develop to their own healthy potential. “For me, it’s easy to be passionate about this. When we see babies, we always want them to have the opportunity to grow up and pursue their dreams.”

The Jorge Posada Foundation is a non-profit organization established by the New York Yankees’ All-Star Catcher, Jorge Posada and his wife, Laura. Their son, Jorge Luis, was diagnosed with Craniosynostosis when he was just ten days old. The Jorge Posada Foundation provides support to families whose child is affected by Craniosynostosis, a congenital or birth defect that causes an abnormally shaped skull.

Learn more at www.jorgeposadafoundation.org

County to Present ‘Healthy Living’ Conference in Spanish

Program will Focus on Living with a Chronic Illness, Medications

White Plains, NY -- The 15th annual “Healthy Living” conference for Spanish-speaking seniors will take place Saturday, Sept. 12 from 8:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Marion W. Fried Auditorium at White Plains Hospital Center, Davis Avenue and East Post Road, White Plains.

The program is free but registration is required by calling (914) 813-6393. People needing transportation should call that number to sign up by Sept. 4.

Keynote speakers Dr. Caridad Fresneda and Dr. José Goris will discuss medications and how to live with a chronic illness.

Dr. Fresneda has a private practice in Yonkers where she is affiliated with St. Joseph’s Hospital. Dr. Goris, who practices in New York City, is a former chairman of the New York State Minority Health Organization established by the New York Yankees’ All-Star Catcher, Jorge Posada and his wife, Laura. Their son, Jorge Luis, was diagnosed with Craniosynostosis when he was just ten days old. The Jorge Posada Foundation provides support to families whose child is affected by Craniosynostosis, a congenital or birth defect that causes an abnormally shaped skull.

Learn more at www.jorgeposadafoundation.org

Celebrate Yiddishfest 2009 At Kensico Dam Plaza

Experience the heart and soul of Yiddish culture at the 36th annual Yiddish Music Festival Sunday, August 23, at the Kensico Dam Plaza in Valhalla from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The festival features great entertainment starting at 5 p.m. with Yiddish folk dancer Sasha who will perform while leading the audience through traditional dances.

The musical entertainment begins at 6 p.m. as guitarist and Bouzouki virtuoso Avram Pengas teams up with singer Magda Fishman for a performance to remember. Also performing will be Mike Burstin, a singer and performer known for his riveting performance in the off-Broadway hit Lansky. Finally, there will be a performance by Pharaoh’s Daughter, a band that makes use of a fusion of electric elements and traditional Judaic sound.

The rain location for this event will be Temple Israel of New Rochelle located at 1000 Pinebrook Boulevard in New Rochelle. For directions, call (914) 235-1800.

Admission and parking are free. Bring blankets or chairs for seating on the lawn.

The 36th annual Yiddish Music Festival is presented by the The Workmen’s Circle/Arbeter Ring and New York Region in cooperation with Westchester County Parks. Additional sponsorship has been provided the Atran Foundation, Golden Land and more than two dozen temples and Jewish community organizations from throughout Westchester.

For more information, call 914-864-PARK or www.westchestergov.com

Monroe College Students Supply Backpacks for Andrus Children

Management Association at Monroe College in New Rochelle raised more than $300 this summer “to help some local children.” A call to the Andrus Children’s Center connected them with a meaningful project to support; providing fully-stocked new backpacks for the 155 children enrolled at award-winning special education Orchard School on the Center’s Yonkers campus and in its therapeutic nursery programs in Peekskill, Yonkers and White Plains.

Kevin Cook, director of development for Andrus, said that this gift would go ‘a long way towards filling the gap’ left by some long-term backpack donor groups who had to bow out this year due to the rough economy.

Those interested in helping this effort may call Mr. Cook at 914-965-3700, ext. 1241.
Rochelle City Council on August 11. Because mixed use (e.g. business and residential combined) will be in the plan, a floating overlay zoning will be used to give “density bonuses.” The proposed height of buildings is 4 floors and the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) is 3.0. But this FAR sharply contrasts to the neighborhood business zoning which allows a FAR of 0.5.

What does FAR mean? According to Wikipedia, FAR is the “ratio of the total floor area of building on a certain location to the size of that location, or the limit imposed on such a ratio.” In other words it is the total square feet of the building divided by the area of the plot.

FAR can be explained further. To achieve a FAR of 3.0 on North Avenue at least three floors must be built because one or two floor buildings would use more land than would be available. To achieve a FAR of 3.0, a three floor building would cover 100% of the plot, 4 floors would cover 75% of the plot. More disturbing in the proposal are five residential lots on Fifth Avenue, right across from the Rochelle Park Historic District which are possibly going to be changed to this high density zoning. Four story buildings will be as close as 6 feet from a bedroom window. It is easy to see why there was speculation that a business could be looking right into someone’s bedroom. These residential lots were included in a comprehensive plan approved by the City Council which recommended they be rezoned to two family residential. So the question remains: why does the report recommend four story buildings? There have been questions raised about who paid for this study.

These figures were contrasted to the FAR of 0.5 which allows the building to use 50% of the land size. In some downtown area there is a permitted FAR of 4.0 but also a stipulation public benefits must be provided. Certainly the concerns of Councilman Lou Trangucci that in the present proposal, which covers North Avenue from Garden Street to Eastchester Road there are 12 places where 10 story buildings can be approved, are disturbing to contemplate. Trangucci has continually questioned the need for more city services when higher densities are proposed. The City Council meeting on August 11 can be viewed on cable or on demand at the City of New Rochelle Website.

Health Reform’s Taboo Topic

Health-care reform is bogged down because none of the bills before Congress deals with the staggering waste of the current system, estimated to be $700 billion to $1 trillion annually. The waste flows from a culture of health care in which every incentive is to do more -- that’s how doctors make money and that’s how they protect themselves from lawsuits.

Yet the congressional leadership has slammed the door on solutions to the one driver of waste that is relatively easy to fix: the erratic, expensive and time-consuming jury-by-jury malpractice system. Pilot projects could test whether this system should be replaced with expert health courts, but leaders who say they want to cut costs will not even consider them.

What are they scared of? The answer is inescapable -- such expert courts might succeed and undercut the special interest of an influential lobby, the trial lawyers. An expeditious and reliable new system would compensate patients more quickly and at a fraction of the overhead of the current medical justice system, which spends nearly 60 cents of every dollar on lawyers’ fees and administrative costs.

Even more compelling, expert health courts would eliminate the need for “defensive medicine,” thereby helping to save enough money for America to afford universal health coverage.

Defensive medicine -- the practice of ordering tests and procedures that aren’t needed to protect a doctor from the remote possibility of a lawsuit -- is ubiquitous. A 2005 survey in the Journal of the American Medical Association related that 93 percent of high-risk specialists in Pennsylvania admitted to the practice, and 83 percent of Massachusetts physicians did the same in a 2008 survey. The same Massachusetts survey showed that 25 percent of all imaging tests were ordered for defensive purposes, and 28 percent and 38 percent, respectively, of those surveyed admitted reducing the number of high-risk patients they saw and limiting the number of high-risk procedures or services they performed.

Defensive medicine is notoriously hard to quantify, but some estimates place the annual cost at $100 billion to $200 billion or more. Quantification is difficult because defensiveness is now embedded in the culture of American health care; it’s hard to separate the financial incentives from the distrust of justice. Yet every physician, and most patients, can give examples. In a recent letter to the Wall Street Journal, a Texas doctor described how, since being unsuccessfully sued in 1995, he has “doubled and tripled the number of tests and consultations that I order.”

A few years ago, I was not allowed to have minor knee surgery at an orthopedic hospital unless I went through a comprehensive “pre-operative examination.” There was no financial incentive to the hospital because this pre-operative exam was to be done elsewhere. As it turned out, I had recently endured all those tests in my annual physical. But the orthopedic hospital would not accept month-old test results, nor even an explicit waiver by me of any liability. The result was pure waste: more than $1,000 spent on wholly unnecessary tests.

Health-care professionals live the reality of defensive medicine every day. Do an online search of the phrase “defensive medicine,” and you will find scores of testimonials. But congressional leadership, amid all the talk of cost-containment, has assiduously avoided even mentioning the phrase.

Containing costs, as Rep. Jim Cooper (D-Tenn.) noted on “Face the Nation” recently, requires overhauling the culture of health-care delivery. Incentives need to be realigned. That requires a legal framework that, instead of encouraging waste, encourages doctors to focus on what’s really needed. One pillar in a new legal framework is a system of justice that is trusted to reliably distinguish between good care and bad care. Reliable justice would protect doctors against unreasonable claims and would expeditiously compensate injured patients. The key is reliability. Traditional ‘tort reform’ -- merely limiting noneconomic damages -- is not sufficient to end defensive medicine, because doctors could still be liable when they did nothing wrong.

The shifts in legal structure required to contain costs are hard to “score,” using the terminology of the Congressional Budget Office. Only with experience can anyone quantify the real value of realigning incentives. But surveys and studies repeatedly confirm what every doctor knows -- that they go through the day ordering tests and procedures that aren’t really needed.

As the nation debates health-care overhaul, not addressing defensive medicine would be a scandal, a willful refusal by Congress to deal with one of the causes of skyrocketing health-care costs. The real crisis here is not that health care is broken; people of good will could come together and create the conditions for rebuilding the incentive structure of health-care delivery. The real crisis is that Congress is broken, and that it answers to special interests instead of the needs of all Americans.

Learn more at the which contains links to other articles he has written.
I’ve known cops who were racists and I’ve known cops who were pathologically brutal, using their authority as a way to vent their anger. There were times when I wondered how some cops ever made it through the screening process and ended up on the street with the authority of life and death in their hands. When I became a cop in 1964, the job was very different; racism was not only tolerated, it was often nurtured by veteran and superior officers. At the tender young age of 21, I was thrust into a world that shattered my understanding of a police officer’s role in society. Having been raised by a single mother with 7 children, in a dilapidated tenement on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, I lived in the same building with blacks, Hispanics, Jews and every other conceivable race and ethnic mix. In addition, I went to school with them, partied with them, dated them and enjoyed dinner at their apartments whenever I was fortunate enough to be invited.

Because of my upbringing, and the fact that my mother always taught us to treat everyone equally (and made us go to church every Sunday), I reached adulthood without any concept of racial prejudice. That’s why I’m convinced that such behavior is not inherent, but must be learned in the same way that someone might learn a craft. When I put on that uniform for the first time in a Brooklyn precinct, in the predominantly black area of Bedford/Stuyvesant, my training in bigotry began. One of my earliest memories is of riding in a patrol car with a crusty veteran of pre-civil rights days. As he backed the marked unit out of the station house driveway, he looked behind him and saw a car driven by a black man, who had the obvious right-of-way. Nevertheless, my racist “trainer” hit the gas pedal and blocked the path of the other car, causing the driver to hit his brakes. “First me nigger, then you,” barked the man who was being paid to protect and serve. I wish I could say that I had the courage to tell him what a despicable human being he was, but the truth is: I stayed silent.

However, he became the first of many cops that caused me to talk to the clerical office, requesting that I not be assigned with them again. I suppose the message got out that I was “different” because I was soon assigned to foot patrol. Sometime later, the department began its own type of integration policy, asking for volunteers to work as black and white radio car teams. The sociological experiment met with initial resentment by cops who couldn’t imagine such close proximity for 8 hours a day with one of “those people.” For me, and for a few other cops like me, younger and not yet infected with the debilitating disease that seemed to be at epidemic proportions in this strange new world, it was a relief. Leroy Spivey, 8 years older and with 6 more years on the job, became my partner and, in a way, we made history as the first “Salt and Pepper” team in our precinct, if not in the entire borough. It wasn’t long before I began to feel the hard stares from some of my “brother officers.” One day, as I was in the muser room looking at the roll call sheets, one of the cops walked over and said in a hushed tone, “Bob, how’s it feel to be working with a nigger?”

I put a hand on his shoulder and turned him around slightly as I pointed toward an adjoining room. “My partner’s in there; why don’t you ask him?” I said through clenched teeth. He brushed my hand away and stormed off. As I had suspected, he was, like most bigots, only capable of spreading his vicious doctrine under a cloak of secrecy. Leroy and I worked together for about 3 years before I was transferred to a precinct in Queens. Today, like me, he’s retired from the job and enjoying a second career. To this day, separated by two thousand miles, we still keep in touch by email and an occasional phone call.

In the wake of the imbroglio in Cambridge, Massachusetts, between Professor Gates, Sg. Crowley and President Obama, I want to make the point that there has been a sea change in race relations in this country since the bad old days I’ve described. Many people, black and white, have struggled to make that change, often at the risk of their lives. Crowley has a stellar reputation as a fair and even-tempered cop. He has been assigned by a black superior officer to teach race relations to other cops. Now let’s look at Gates. He’s a black professor at Harvard, the most prestigious university in the world. The mayor of Cambridge is black; the governor of Massachusetts is black and the President of the United States is black. Hence, by what stretch of the imagination can this man claim that he’s a victim of racial bias when a white cop (accompanied by a black and Hispanic cop) asks him for his identification at the scene of a reported burglary? Professor Gates should be ashamed to use that tired old canard. It stains the memory of all those before him who faced attacks by police dogs and club-swinging sheriff’s deputies, segregated schools and relegation to the back of the bus. Those people who suffered and died during the struggle for civil rights deserve better than to have the fruits of their victory spoiled by the fraudulent demonstrations of an irascible opportunist.

Bob Weir is a contributing columnist to Yonkers Tribune and the Westchester Herald.
Ed Koch Commentary: Are We Our Brother’s Keeper?

By Edward I. Koch

This week, I will return to work. A few more words about my health and then back to the weekly commentary.

The most satisfying moment I felt on returning home after six weeks in a hospital bed was not eating apple pie or drinking freshly-squeezed orange juice, which I actually got at the hospital. It was taking a real shower. After six weeks of being sponge-bathed in bed, a warm shower was heaven. The little things in life are not so little if you don’t have them.

I have invited all the doctors who took care of me and their spouses to a dinner at Peter Luger’s Steak House in Brooklyn. I am eternally in their debt. They saved my life. For those of you who question the bill of fare, you should know that I have been given license to eat anything I want until I gain back ten pounds. Then I have been told to go on a diet for those with cardiac problems. Interestingly, of the first half-dozen physicians I invited to dinner, none had ever been to Peter Luger’s. It will be interesting to see what they order.

The news story that incensed me the most in many years involved the alleged corruption of 44 people in New Jersey, about 15 of whom are identifiable as Jewish. A majority of those arrested were not Jewish. They are accused of various crimes, including money laundering, the selling of body parts, i.e., a kidney for $160,000 while paying the donor $10,000, and other crimes. Three mayors of New Jersey towns were arrested and two have since resigned, but still proclaim their innocence.

Those who will immediately point to our well known maxim of the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, should know that in no way relates to the court of public opinion. We are entitled to have our own opinions on innocence or guilt before the trial based on what we conclude from the media reports on the government charges. The maxim of presumption of innocence relates to the burden of the government to prove its allegations in court beyond a reasonable doubt. The burden of proof is not on the defendant to prove his innocence.

We all know that mistakes are made and that innocent people are on occasion found guilty and criminals occasionally go free. The best example of the public disagreeing with a criminal case outcome would be the O.J. Simpson verdict of not guilty in the case involving the murders of his wife and a young man. So let me say up front that I believe the government will succeed in proving its case against most, if not all, of the defendants.

The Jewish defendants are members of the Syrian-Jewish community living along the Jersey seashore. They were turned in by one of their own members, Solomon Dwek, who cooperated with the police after having been convicted in a different matter.

That is the background for the incident which followed. Dwek’s father, Rabbi Israel Dwek, a prominent member of the Syrian-Jewish community, is reported in the media as having stood up in his synagogue and declared his son to be dead for having denounced a fellow Jew to the police. I was outraged by his actions which were reported in the New York Post as follows: “Israel Dwek plans to sit shiva for his son because he is so disgusted with his turning on other Jews. The father citing ‘the Talmudic Law of Moser that prohibits a Jew from informing on another Jew to a non-Jew’ renounced his son from the pulpit at his synagogue in Deal, NJ, on Saturday.”

I am familiar with the religious reasoning. Indeed, I believe the killer of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made the same outrageous defense of his dastardly deed, claiming Rabin was betraying the Jewish nation to the Arabs.

In countries where the government engages in anti-Semitism, the best illustration would be Czarist Russia. I have no doubt that Jews reluctantly ever helped the Czarist government to punish a fellow Jew and send him to Siberia. I have no doubt that African-Americans in this country during the days of Jim Crow rarely would help the white society injuring them every day to help convict a fellow black. I doubt that many Chechens are cooperating with Russia or its Quisling government against fellow Chechens.

I understand such actions and sympathize with the victims of prejudice and hostility directed at them by the government. But that cannot be a defense in a country like ours where the rights of all of our citizens without regard to race, ethnicity or religion are guaranteed. I call upon the prestigious Board of Rabbis in New York and the Board of Rabbis in New Jersey to denounce Rabbi Israel Dwek for his statement. Those boards, made up of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis, have an obligation to make clear that it would be unacceptable for a Christian not to cooperate with the police in bringing a Christian who committed a criminal act to justice and that the same rule of law applies to Jews.

We are an ethnic society and, while we are not our brother’s keepers, we do rejoice in their successes and are embarrassed by their crimes. That applies whether we are black, Irish, Jewish, Italian, etc. The law of the land is the law. The Honorable Edward I. Koch served New York City as its 105th Mayor from 1978 to 1989.

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Is The Beale Squeal Gaining Fresh Appeal?

By Joe Klock, Sr

A generation or so ago, actor Peter Finch scored a cinematic hat trick by winning Best Actor honors from the Academy Awards, the Golden Globes and the British Academy of Film & Television Arts for his portrayal of a washed-up and worn-out television anchorman named Howard Beale in the smash-hit movie, “Network.”

Soon to be fired anyway because of his erratic behavior, Beale launched an on-air diatribe about the national TV set and, running amok around the studio, urged his listeners to throw open their windows and shout his name. He pumped them up with the roaring rant, “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take this anymore!”

There followed a nationwide frenzy of action as the public lunched from a fed-up lethargy to a fired-up activism and catapulted Beale to supercelebrity status. By the end of his performance, he had shattered the bounds of his studio, touched the edges of his state and, running amok across the nation, sparked a nationwide frenzy of action.

The unexpected result was that an entire nation followed his instructions literally and exploded in an outburst of pent-up anger and frustration from coast to coast.

There followed a nationwide frenzy of action as the public lunched from a fed-up lethargy to a fired-up activism and catapulted Beale to supercelebrity status.

Aside: The Paddy Chayefsky script won the same three awards noted above and, just three years ago, was voted one of the top ten movie scripts of all time by the Writers Guild of America. Nostalgia buffs can enjoy a two-minute (partially “R” rated) reprise of the following link to their browsers:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=WINDtPXmmE&featurerelated

The fictional Beale ended up being assassinated, also on live TV, but the story illustrates one of the central themes often proffered by this column: the worst nightmare of entrenched politicians and other power brokers is an informed, aroused and activated electorate.

Their tenure and treachery depends entirely on an ignorant and apathetic citizenry; thus, they have a morbid and vampirish fear of light shining on their dark deeds.

Recent events suggest that America’s general public found its collective voice and displayed a genuine alarm about the pace at which governmental “reforms” are stampeding through the pages of current history and the staggering future cost thereof.

Town Hall meetings, both spontaneous and group-sponsored, have gained national attention and, increasingly, influenced the direction of national legislation and partisan proposals in our District of Conundrumia.

Most noteworthy, a groundswell of skepticism and concern among taxpayers has resulted in mass whistle-blowing and, among previously inactive citizens whose hackles and goose bumps have been raised by recent news items. Among them are reports of thousand-plus-page bills passed by elected reprehensibles who hadn’t even read them and frightening forecasts of the deficits which will be dumped on our children, grandchildren and generations yet to be begotten.

In the forefront is the matter of health care legislation, which came just one stop short of being railroaded through in time for an ill-deserved congressional vacation.

As it now stands, our lawmakers are emerging from the protection of their Capitol Cocoon and returning home to mingle with the masses whom they have sworn to serve.

One hopes - at least this one does - that they will voluntarily expose themselves to maximal constituent feedback through organized meetings and informal meanderings among those to whom they owe their sole fealty.

If the past is a prelude to the future, too many of them will jump off on junks or schmooze solely with sycophants before a lemming-like return to the treadmills of their party-driven pursuits on Capitol Hill.

Before they escape, YOU have an opportunity to call them, write them, visit their local offices and/or attend a town meeting and give them an up close and personal piece of your mind, after determining exactly what’s on theirs. (Petitions and e-mails have an underwhelming impact on them.)

If you approve of their plans, they both need and deserve your support, but if you’re mad as hell about what’s happening, you’d better throw open your windows and theirs, or forever hold that piece of your mind.

Of major concern, of course, is the health care situation, which requires comprehensive, thoughtful, long-term and level-headed attention, to ensure that the baby of what’s best in the present system is not thrown out with the bath water of its shortcomings.

It’s “anymore” time folks, to be followed by “forevermore,” if we choose to sit on our assets and liabilities in the status quo and settle for the modus operandi of those calling the shots. Maybe we’re seeing in the tea leaves, tea parties and Town Halls some of the zeal and appeal of the star-crossed Beale of long-ago Teeveeland.

Freelance wordworker Joe Klock, Sr. (joeklock@aol.com) winters in Key Largo and Towns of Key Largo and Coral Gables, Florida and summers in New Hampshire. More of his Freelance “Klockwork” can be found at www.joeklock.com.

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WHYTLegal@gmail.com
Alec Baldwin for US Congress. No, Really.

By Dr. Greg Rabidoux

It’s not like we should be surprised that actor, 30 Rock co-star, SNL guest-host record holder and political junkie Alec Baldwin chose the air-brushed pages of Playboy magazine recently to (again) confess his intent to run for US Congress. In different years and during different playmate months, other politicos and celebrities have bared all, sort of, to Playboy. Former President Jimmy Carter confessed to lustings in his heart after women other than his wife. Well before Mel “Tequila Chaser” Gibson flung religious and sexual epithets around like they were Lethal Weapon DVDs during his notorious DUI arrest, he confessed that women should never be priests because men and women were simply “not equal.” And recently crowned US Senator from Minnesota and former SNL writer and “Stuart Smalley” cast member, Al Franken, discussed calling George W. Bush impersario Karl Rove “turd blossom” and a “treasonous snake” in his between-the-folds interview.

No, the forum Baldwin chose is far from surprising and by design, mildly titillating (now there’s a word Hugh Hefner must adore) and even appropriate. And this is not the first time the temperamental actor has been both controversial and political. Sometimes it’s been a strategic move by the eldest Baldwin, the man his third grade teacher once predicted he would become president, more often it’s been the product of impulse and ego. Two qualities Alec has, like his impressive thatch of hair for a man of 51, in abundance. The question this time seems to be, “Should anyone, even the “Mad Irishman” Alec Baldwin, take his announced intention to run for Congress seriously?” Before we simply laugh off this latest celebrity-confession as mere PR drivel, and before Brad Pitt gets elected mayor of New Orleans (more about that taste gumbo movement in a moment) let’s just take a quick look at the political portfolio of Alec Baldwin, possible congressional candidate. What’s the worst that could happen? It’s not like he’d call us “a trust fund puppet and his sociopath puppeteer” like he called George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, would he? Let’s risk incurring the wrath of the one-time face of the Jack Ryan movie franchise anyways.

The case to take an Alec Baldwin congressional bid seriously in his political hunt for November voters would probably include the following points. First, while today’s version of Alec is middle-aged and noticeably puffier than in his NBC television day-time Doctors days (happens to us all) he still retains movie star looks and presence. Second, associated with the star looks is the star salary. Mr. Baldwin could easily self-finance any candidacy for public office, a major plus, let me tell you. Third, he has aggressively burnished his liberal credentials over the years both on and off-screen. On screen, he has lobbed for and won coveted parts in such lefty-loved and generally politicized movies as Ghosts of Mississippi, Nuremberg, and Pearl Harbor and of course, The Hunt for Red October. Off-screen, he has testified before the real Congress on funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, has served as a member on The Creative Coalition Advisory Board and the People for the American Way. People for the Ethical Treatment for Animals (PETA) has awarded Baldwin their Linda McCartney/Memorial Award for his dedication to their mission (okay, this award is arguably a plus and a minus), and he has helped raise funds on behalf of cancer research in honoring his mom, Carol, a breast cancer survivor.

He is a frequent blogger on the Huffington Post blog along with pal Rosie O’Donnell, been an ardent AIDS activist and fundraiser over the year and has claimed that right wing, religious wackos hijacked the Republican Party. He’s also been a highly visible opponent against nuclear power. He even went to Georgetown University and studied political science before getting bit by the acting bug. Not too long ago, he confronted an angry and vocal supporter of nuclear plant power by quipping that the guy was probably just “upset because 30 Rock is in reruns” and that the protest was the “results of radiation exposure.” Any wonder that stars are better off in years when Hollywood writers are not on strike? Finally, Baldwin is no Jack Ryan-come-lately to the world of politics, once stating that the older he got the less preposterous (the idea of him becoming president) it became. Remember when many actually thought the idea of former B-star actor Ronnie Reagan occupying the White House seemed preposterous? How about Arnold the “Terminator” becoming the “Governator” of California or even Jesse “The Body” Ventura throwing down his opponents en route to becoming Governor of Minnesota? Preposterous maybe, impossible, clearly not.

The case against Alec Baldwin, or for that matter, virtually any highly visible, successful Hollywood star-turned-politico running for and becoming elected to public office would probably include the following evidence. First, stars frequently don’t lead their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect. George Clooney, often mentioned as candidate worthy gets the night. That’s enough to their celebrity life with thoughts that someday they will air all their dirty laundry for would-be voters to inspect.
Voters were enthusiastic to sign Tony Castro’s petition, especially in the Hispanic and African-American communities where 90% of the signatures came from. These two ethnic groups have suffered tremendously under the oppression of The Janet DiFiore regime. Civil rights violations, police brutality complaints, and prosecutorial misconduct is at all time high under DiFiore’s leadership. Many voters also expressed extreme anger over the way her office handled the murder of Detective Christopher Ridley. Many voters also realized that she became a Democrat only because she could not win on the Republican line. Janet DiFiore is not recognized as a Democrat in her hometown of Mount Vernon.

Janet DiFiore must take a stand and let the voters know about her unaccomplished record of success. She owes it to the voters to explain why she prosecuted Irma Marquez, Rui Florem, and the 3 boys from Mount Vernon who were brutalized by rogue Police Officers. She must explain her stance on the death penalty and the rockafeller drugs laws on which she is an avid supporter.

Her infatuation of Sam Zherka is not going to win her re-election. Voters are simply fed up that her entire campaign is dedicated to exploiting Sam Zherka. The voters of Mount Vernon are extremely intelligent and remember that Janet DiFiore was and is a proud supporter of President George W. Bush, whom was not a popular figure in the Hispanic and African-American Communities. I believe I am being singled out by he DiFiore camp because I am a vocal critic of Janet DiFiore, a vocal supporter of Tony Castro, and I am friends with Sam Zherka.

Respectfully Submitted,
Samuel L. Rivers
Democratic District Leader
Mount Vernon City Council Candidate

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IQ & A: Chuck Lesnick, Yonkers City Council President

From Page 1

tax credit bill and it was designed as a stimulus for cities like Yonkers to move forward with adaptive re-use of their historic building inventory. And it’s ironic that this Mayor, this administration, would want to tear these gems down at a time when the rest of the world is moving towards adaptive re-use and historic preservation. And I also pointed out when I spoke about the energy efficiency of adaptive re-use... So there are many reasons to support land marking. And the truth is that the process has worked... Lastly, this is the sort of thing that is written in the city code and traditionally changes to the city code, as opposed to the city charter, are made legislatively. So if they Mayor wants to make some suggested changes to the code he should change a proposal over to the City Council, we’ll deliberate it and either change the code or not change the code. This is not appropriate for a Charter Revision Committee.

Q – ...Are there any things about what Mayor Amicone has said in terms of his criticisms of the Landmarks Board that you agree with... for instance his claim that an application process can be stopped, six months without any action, for example? Or any other criticisms he has made about the Board? Do you see justification in any of those?

A – We recently encouraged the Mayor to establish a demolition review ordinance whereby any building over a certain age that was applied for a demolition permit there would be this process and it would essentially be a six month moratorium until the proper procedures were followed to landmark or not landmark a building. Since this happened about a year ago I think only three or four buildings have fallen into the category and the Landmarks Board has very quickly within a month on all three or four of them... some of the speakers addressed that by saying ‘what’s six months in the grand scheme of things if you’re saving these historic gems that have been around for over fifty years?’ And some of them talked about buildings like the Carnegie Library that had been torn down and other buildings that had fallen down because of the passive aggressiveness of neglect, intentional neglect, of city owned buildings. One person pointed out the Lyndon Street Pool which was a gem worth saving until the city turned the heat off and then the water pipes burst... School Six was another one, the old Jewish Community Center was another one. Buildings that the city had acquired but didn’t take care of, and then they were lost forever.

Q – ...Back to another criticism that the Mayor has raised, is that the Landmarks Board, unless there are changes, it is going to stand in the way of affordable housing..., and he pointed out the Greystone Project for example.

A – Greystone is a great organization which in the past has done some tremendous adaptive reuses, like the Philipse Hall where, it’s very interesting, when I was sworn in as Council President, we had our inaugural ball there. And Franklin Roosevelt had had a party for Alfred E. Smith in the very same room where I sat Hillary Clinton next to Franklin D. Roosevelt, III from Sarah Lawrence College. And there’s a lot of history there and Greystone respected that... The Greystone Project is nearing conclusion... I think that of all the buildings we’ve landmarked in Yonkers, the historic district that that project is located in has the most diamonds in the rough, the unpolished gems. So if you don’t have a vision for what it used to look like and what it could look like, you could scratch your head and wonder why you’re saving it, and that is what the Mayor was exploiting by using it as his case study... It’s a bad government to do that, to try to change the entire structure of land marking in the City of Yonkers because you’re angry over one result; which by the way, will probably be a moot issue by the time it’s on the ballot because the project has already been landmarked, so there is nothing you can do to change that. And all he is trying to do now is weaken the negotiating ability of the Landmarks Board by having this threat that you can appeal it to the Planning Board looming over their heads. And even the Greystone folks have said, by the time this thing is on the ballot in November, if it’s on the ballot, if their project isn’t approved, they’re moving on. So it isn’t like this is going to remedy the Greystone situation, so it’s unfortunate it’s being used as such.

Q – You really were a political science major, I haven’t heard anyone mention Al Smith since graduate school. Just one more question on this Landmarks Board issue, are there still eleven vacancies on the Board?

A – Eleven positions on the Board and currently there are five vacancies and there is one guy who is going to be away for a while starting in September. So it’s a real problem because the rules currently say you need six people to have quorum. Normally in situations where an executive needs to get approval from the legislative body for multiple appointments they work out some sort of procedure. Like for instance when Moynihan and D’Amato were in the Senate, their procedure for federal district judges their procedure was whoever was the party of the president would get three appointments and the other party would get one appointment... that way you have some sort of balance. This Mayor sent up four names for what was initially four vacancies without consulting the legislature. We then gave him three names to consider and by this point a fifth vacancy had opened up. We asked him if he would do two of our names and three of his, he refused. We asked him if he would do four of his names, and pick one of our names for this and one of our names for the Planning Board, he refused... We’re saying that we’re perfectly willing to come forward with these names and have a hearing as long as you put some of our names in. As a Council, we are not allowed to put forth a name unless the Mayor sends it to us, but the person can’t be appointed until we approve it. So you’d think there’d be a little more negotiation on the advice and consent law and that hasn’t happened in six months... now one other possibility if the Mayor doesn’t compromise with us is that the Council has the right to change the number of people on the Board. So if we just dropped the number of people down to five or six or seven, the quorum requirement would be diminished... then the Board could continue to operate. The Board would like to have a full complement so that they can have subcommittees and they can better delegate their work. But this Board is made up of volunteers, like many of the Boards in the city of Yonkers... And you know the Board was pretty offended that the Mayor referred to them in one of his recent press releases as a ‘second tier board’ and he was offended that they were setting policy for the city of Yonkers. But you know these people have certain expertise, there are certain requirements to be on the Landmarks Board, ... these are talented people.

Q – Are you planning to take action to drop the number of people on the Board at this point?

A – The prospect of Jack [John F.] Prill needing to leave in September for some period of months, we will have to take action. So if the Mayor does not agree to some sort of compromise then we will have to act.

Jeanne S. Zaino, Ph.D., is Chair & Associate Professor of the Political Science Department and Pre-Law Coordinator at Iona College, 715 North Avenue, New Rochelle, NY 10801. Learn more at http://www.iona.edu/artsscience/departments/politicalscience/ or direct email correspondence to zaino@iona.edu.

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