

THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

Cathedral Station ♦ P.O. Box 1316 ♦ New York, N.Y. 10025 ♦ (212) 866-6378

Website: ThreeParksDems.org ♦ Email: ThreeParksDems@aol.com

President

Daniele Gerard

Editor

Ray Schwartz (tappsch@nyc.rr.com)

District Leaders

Bob Botfeld

Cynthia Doty

State Committee

Lynn Thomas

December 2008

Celebrate the Democrats' Victories at the Three Parks Holiday Party

DATE: Sunday, December 7, 2008

SPECIAL TIME: 5:30 PM- 8:30 PM

**PLACE: American Youth Hostels
891 Amsterdam Avenue at 103rd Street**

ROOM: Chapel



President's Column

By Daniele Gerard

How fantastic we all feel! On Election Night, within seconds of the race's being officially called for PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA, hundreds and hundreds (dare I say thousands?) of wildly ecstatic New Yorkers poured into the streets in front of the Storefront, so blocking Broadway that the police closed the avenue from 104th to 106th Street. Forty-five minutes later, they begged Cynthia to send the hordes home so traffic could resume.

Congratulations to all of us—from the voters to the campaign workers to everyone who can now look forward to the end of the folly and arrogance of the Bush Administration and to the real solutions proposed by President Obama and Vice President Biden. With the majorities we've secured in Congress, we should all be able to work together on getting out of Iraq, closing Guantanamo, combating global warming, shifting our priorities to effective solutions to the financial crisis, providing health care to all and ensuring every child a chance at a good education.

Along these lines, we send a hearty thanks to Congressman Jerry Nadler, who provided a comprehensive and crystal clear overview of the economy and financial crisis at our October 15th meeting. The Congressman rendered accessible a complex topic that is often poorly and incompletely covered in the press—and even found time afterwards to stop by the storefront to cheer on the troops before the final Presidential debate!

Many thanks are also due to Congressman Charles B. Rangel, who shared his enthusiasm for the Obama administration when he addressed the Club on November 12th. Mr. Rangel provided invaluable insights into the upcoming Congress and conducted a lively question and answer session.

Also at the November 12th meeting, we circulated sign-up sheets for areas of interest that club members would like Three Parks to concentrate on. Your top priorities included health care, the environment and the Iraq War. Stay tuned for subcommittee reports on what the Club will be doing on these issues and how you can make a difference.

And don't forget the Three Parks Holiday Party on

Sunday, December 7th from 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Youth Hostel. Bring a dish to share and join your fellow members, friends and neighbors so we can keep the celebration going!

Finally, we have a tremendous victory to report. Our honoree at last May's Three Parks benefit, Justice Will Be Served!, was one of several plaintiffs that won a \$4.6 million award in federal court for delivery workers at Saigon Grill.

District Leader's Report

By Bob Botfeld

The Bush nightmare is almost over. By the time this newsletter will be published, it will be a month since the election. One more month until President Barack Obama is inaugurated. But the exultant scene on election night of thousands of Westsiders, Obama volunteers and neighbors, filling the north and south lanes of Broadway from 104 to 106th street, cheering and hugging each other will remain in memory for a very long time. There was joy in this victory, but more importantly, an enormous feeling of relief.

The relief was shared by the many tourists who stopped by the Storefront. The foreigners who stopped by to buy Obama buttons would tell us how their countrymen were overwhelmingly hoping for Obama's victory. Among the many benefits of Obama's victory, a very important one is that it allows our country to rejoin and be welcomed by the international community as a re-civilized nation with civil liberties and with a new foreign policy to work with the rest of the world in solving our global environmental, economic, and political problems.

Everyone who worked on our incredibly successful Storefront campaign, managed by Lynn and Steve Max, should be congratulated for all their hard work. Using bus trips and phone banks, we reached out to tens of thousands of swing voters in Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Hampshire, Florida, and New Jersey. According to the Bristol, PA campaign organizer, Peter Nilsson, our volunteers helped increase the Democratic margin in Bristol by three percent. Our button buyers helped send 4,000 yard signs to Bucks County. Three vans of Three Park's club members and Columbia graduate students helped invigorate the local campaigns around Lancaster, Ohio.

Locally, in the Three Parks part of the 69th assembly district from 96th to 110th streets, voter turnout was about the same as in 2004. This lack of increase over 2004 was not unexpected since in 2004 nearly 92% of the registered Democrats voted in our ED's. Although the Election Day lines were very long early in the morning, they had disappeared by early afternoon. There was no evening rush of voters. Turnout was about 20% higher than in 2004 in the ED's with largely minority residents in Douglass Houses and the ED's adjoining Manhattan Avenue. But in the ED's adjoining Broadway and West End Ave, voter turnout was lighter. Democrats probably maintained their traditionally reliable heavy vote in our area while Republican and independent voters seemed to have voted less than in 2004.

Philip H. Reed, my predecessor as District Leader and later the Councilman from the 8th Council District died on November 6th after a long illness. Phil had an infectious enjoyment of life, politics, the community, and people and a large reserve of solid common sense. He loved to talk but did not waste words. Our community benefited from his work on reducing asthma, his support for our parks, libraries, and schools, and the thoughtful compromises he helped reach in creating the Regent Residence and other social service agencies in our district.

YES WE DID!

By District Leader Cynthia Doty

Congratulations to President-Elect Barack Obama and to all of the millions who participated in this amazing campaign! An exhilarating victory not only to be thankful for, but also to be inspired by!

There are so many memories of this entire campaign season, but those from the Denver convention through Election Day are especially wonderful. The amazing outpouring of volunteers at our campaign Storefront on Broadway captured the essence of Obama's whole campaign and is the reason that he (and we) were so successful: this was a terrific grassroots effort that engaged a truly diverse group of dedicated people.

Thousands of our neighbors from literally all walks of life representing many races, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, and ages all came together to help out. Over a thousand went on our buses, vans and cars to canvass in Bristol, Philadelphia, Ohio, and New Jersey, and hundreds volunteered

in our phone bank, making 35,783 calls to voters in other states. Many gave hours of volunteer labor to register voters, enter data, staff our button tables, make signs, oversee the Storefront, captain our phone banks and tabling operations, poll watch, and manage the Election Day volunteers. So many people donated supplies, refreshments and physical labor to make the Storefront function. We had overflow crowds for our debate watch parties and hundreds marched up Broadway to the 125th St. Obama rally. Children held bake sales for Obama and high school students leafleted, tabled, and worked the computers. People kept appearing with new ideas and creative offers. At times there were more volunteers than we could find jobs or seats for (we even had volunteers phoning from chairs out on the sidewalk). A truly amazing grassroots, bottom up campaign; such an exciting mix of all types of neighbors!

We all came together and did our part to elect our nation's first African American President, Barack Obama. Thank you everyone! Now let's sustain this grassroots activity and this celebration of diversity. Let's hold on to the energy and spirit of this election and continue to join forces as we help our new President govern through the difficult times ahead. We in Three Parks are still fired up. Please join us.

Many thanks to all who helped manage the campaign '08 Storefront.
Special thanks to Lynn and Steve Max for all their leadership.

The Mayor's End Run Around Term Limits

By Daniele Gerard

The Mayor has been handed a chance at another term as a reward for his cynical, perfectly timed power grab.

It was cynical because the Mayor and City Council Members ran for office knowing they could serve only eight years. But on October 23rd, they ran roughshod over New Yorkers' 1993 and 1996 votes in favor of term limits to extend their own terms in office. It was also cynical because, as reported in *The New York Times*, in exchange for Ron Lauder's remaining mum on the issue, the Mayor granted him a spot on the City's Charter Revision Commission where he "will vigorously support a return to a two-term limit."

**Remembering Phil Reed,
An Abridged Political History**
By Steve Strauss

The Mayor's power grab was perfectly timed because, first, any proposal to extend term limits (or abolish them altogether) could easily have been placed on the ballot for the November 4th election—apparently, the Mayor had been polling and meeting with business leaders on the issue since at least last Spring. Second, anyone who would or could have worked effectively to oppose the Mayor was working 24/7 to elect President Obama. Some of us barely had time to contact our Council Members Melissa Mark-Viverito and Inez Dickens, both of whom are in their first terms, and our former Council Member Gale Brewer. Dickens voted with the Mayor; Mark-Viverito voted against him. Brewer, who is term-limited, voted against the Mayor—and her own interests, we are proud to note. Furthermore, members of Three Parks have differing views on term limits and referendums, but the expedited nature of the entire process denied our membership the ability to hear these views at one of our monthly meetings, pass a resolution on the matter and work together for whatever position the Club adopted.

Many of us are against term limits, certainly for the Council, because as a general matter they are used to reduce the positive role government can play in people's lives by automatically dismissing elected officials; regular elections are the better alternative. Clearly, however, the Mayor's shotgun approach that benefited only certain current office holders was no way to address the flaws in term limits. Many of us also believe that referendums are rarely the best way to decide issues, because they are so often financed by expensive media campaigns only the few can afford. Moreover, the whims of the Mayor and the Council simply obliterated the results of the two term-limit referendums. It remains to be seen if any of the pending lawsuits can convince the judiciary and the State that something is indeed wrong with this picture.

Finally, the 29 Council Members who supported the Mayor may have done more than extend the terms of 35 of their colleagues. They made it possible that come 2013, perhaps the entire Council will be out of office; New Yorkers could then have close to 51 novices and their untested staff governing the City and dealing with whatever the next crisis may be. The Mayor's bill and the Council's vote did not represent public service, but a slap in the public's face.

I never knew too much about Phil's California years, his early gay liberation activities or Phil Reed, the anti-war protester. No, my knowledge of Phil began with his early '80s neighborhood activism in Manhattan Valley.

Sometime in 1985 or early 1986 Phil's State Senator, Leon Bagues, died in office. That set off a tremendous battle for the seat and Phil threw his hat in the ring. As most of Three Parks knows, when an elected official dies while in office, a small and obscure bunch of local Democrats, the County Committee, gets to pick the party nominee. The race quickly settled down to three candidates – Phil, Galen Kirkland and the guy with the well known Dad, David Paterson. Harlem held together and the West Side split our votes between Galen and Phil. Although he lost the County Committee selection, Phil was undeterred; with the support of Three Parks and many of his friends, Phil went out and got himself on the ballot for the September primary. The most notable thing to come out of that race was the piece of campaign literature we thought up that began with the opening teaser line "there are three black men with mustaches who want to represent you in Albany ...".

Three years later Phil re-launched his political career by defeating me in the Three Parks club endorsement vote for District Leader. It was a landslide of about 5 votes out of over 100 cast. Phil quickly went on to become a hard working District Leader known for his independence and integrity.

City Council redistricting in 1991 or 1992 didn't treat the Upper West Side well. We were split down the middle with pieces of our community attached to the Central Harlem and East Harlem Council districts. Phil and others quickly took a look at the numbers and realized that a West Sider would have a shot at winning the East Harlem seat if the folks on the other side of the Park stayed divided.

In his first run for the Council Phil jumped in with two opponents whose last names were giant in East Harlem politics – Bill Del Toro and Adam Clayton Powell IV. Phil hired a smart young campaign manager named Matt Benson and he

ran a much more polished campaign than in 1986 but it came up a little short.

In 1997 Powell ran for Borough President. Phil was in again and this time we got him elected. Phil's campaigns were not always the most organized. He maybe used the Bill Clinton model rather than the Barack Obama model, but he built winning coalitions of color-blind individuals who wanted decisions made on their merits by elected officials who were in it for the people and not for themselves and their friends. Let's all remember that Phil was endorsed by the *New York Times* in 1997 and again 2001.

Phil never had elections and re-elections handed to him like so many politicians. He had to work hard every time. The September 2001 re-election campaign was as tough as any of Phil's races and the hard fought primary election was interrupted by the tragedy of the Trade Center attack. We regrouped along with New York and got Phil re-elected to his second and final term.

Phil was a much better elected official than politician. Yeah, he did the political things he had to do to remain in office, but what he really preferred was legislating and governing, seeing programs happen, helping craft policies and voting on budgets that affected his district and New York. Phil liked to see things happen.

In reading all of the comments that people made about Phil on the City Room blog last week I noted in particular that two politicians, Freddie Ferrer and Bob Zuckerman, specifically, mentioned how truthful Phil could be, sometimes to his own detriment. What I liked so much about Phil was that most of the time he didn't play the usual New York political games. During the first year or two of Phil's term in the Council many people in East Harlem were just astonished that Phil treated his African American, Latino and Caucasian constituents the same.

I often wondered what would have been Phil's future if AIDS and cancer had not gotten in the way. If he had had the opportunity to serve two terms in good health what would his Borough Presidency campaign have been like? Even if that race had not been successful there is no reason not to believe that Phil could have been a Commissioner of a city agency or returned to a successful career in the private or non-profit sector.

While we'll never know the answer to this question, we'll all live with the knowledge that we knew a good guy who cared about kids, cared about his friends, worked to make New York a better place and provided all of us with some joy for a few years of our lives.

A memorial service for Phil Reed will be held on Thurs. Dec. 4th from 6 PM to 8 PM at Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Drive between W. 120th and W. 122nd Streets.

The Strange World of Secretary Paulson Grows Stranger By Steve Max

In the October *Newsletter* we highlighted an odd statement by Treasury Secretary Paulson to the effect that if the bank bailout package limited executive salaries, then the banks might not participate. We asked, if it is true that the banks are on the verge of bankruptcy and about to go under, how could they possibly object to being bailed out?

The odor of the already fishy bailout became stronger when *The Times* reported on October 15th that the CEOs of the nine largest American banks met with Paulson and were told that they must be bailed out and sell shares of stock to the government, like it or not. At least three bankers were cited in the article as saying that they neither needed nor wanted the money. The Chairman of Wells Fargo said his bank was not in trouble and didn't need a bailout. Paulson insisted, and Wells Fargo left with \$25 billion.* The CEO of Bank of America also objected, saying the bank had just raised \$10 billion on its own. Paulson demanded that he take \$15 billion more. John J. Mack of Morgan Stanley said he had just closed a \$9 billion deal with a Japanese bank. He emerged from the meeting with \$10 billion more. Other bankers may have resisted as well. Fed Chair Ben Bernanke, who was present, reportedly told the bankers that the session need not be combative.

Act Three is even stranger. It seems that while giving a total of \$250 billion to banks and investment houses, Paulson didn't tell them that

* Figures from the *Wall Street Journal On Line*, 10/30/08

they had to use the cash to make loans. So guess what—they didn't. *Times* reporter Joe Nocera managed to listen in on a JPMorgan Chase employee conference call and heard the host executive say that the money would be used to buy other banks: "I think that there are going to be some great opportunities for us to grow in this environment and I think we have an opportunity to use that \$25 billion in that way...."(NYT 10/25/08) On November 13,th *The Times* reported: "The Treasury Department on Wednesday officially abandoned the original strategy behind its \$700 billion effort to rescue the financial system, as administration officials acknowledged that banks and financial institutions were as unwilling as ever to lend to consumers." Of course the banks don't have to give back the money!

While *The Times* editorial page was criticizing Paulson for not putting any conditions on the bailout, stock market analyst Paul Kedrosky defended the banks saying, "Now, was this bailout sold properly, with people told that banks shouldn't and wouldn't begin lending straight away? No, it wasn't. Nevertheless, reasonable people should have been able to figure out on their own that giving banks capital just so they lend it out again into a deleveraging economy is absurd." Good point, Mr. Kedrosky, but loans are what Congress was told would be made. Perhaps the Democratic majority is too reasonable. The Bushies lied about everything else; why believe them now?

The real point however, is this. The next time elected officials come before us saying that there is just no money, we should hoot them out of the room. There obviously is money. Governor Paterson should reincorporate New York State as a bank and watch the cash flow in. Surely then Paulson will understand that New York is also too big to fail.

Too Young to Vote, But Not to Help

Ali (Alexandra) Haridopolos

This fall, I was a volunteer at the Obama Storefront along with many others. I started volunteering after Labor Day and through November 4th. Though I am 15 years old and therefore cannot vote, I was determined not to allow the election to pass me by. I wanted to be a part of this historic event. When I told people I was volunteering, they were astonished and each mimicked, "But you can't even vote yet." But that

was precisely why. Just because I myself cannot vote, I wanted to contribute in another way. This is what drew me to the Storefront on 105th and Broadway; I was able to register people to vote, enter volunteer's information to the database and make a trip to Pennsylvania to campaign for Obama. Most importantly, I felt as though I was doing something not for myself, but for the rest of the world. Too much was at stake; more deaths due to the Iraq war, more people without health care, and an economy that disregards the needs of lower and middle class people hung in the balance of this year's election. These needs became even more apparent when I went to Pennsylvania with two of my good friends on Sunday October 26th. It was a beautiful fall day and no person we encountered seemed to discourage us. We even left feeling as though we convinced one or two people. These encounters gave us hope for Pennsylvania and the experience as a whole was particularly rewarding on election night.

Once California's returns were reported and the announcer confirmed Barack Obama as the next President of the United States, there was a sense of overwhelming joy and relief throughout the Storefront. I cried and hugged the other dedicated volunteers and even those whom I had never met. The street was filled with the sounds of champagne bottles popping, people yelling and cars honking. Any car that dared to drive by would get mercilessly jumped and danced on. It was complete nirvana and I could not help to stop and think: one man was able to inspire all of this.

Lastly, I would like to thank the dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers at Three Parks and Broadway Democrats for making my first adventure into organized politics so memorable.

Proposed Club Changes

By Alan Flacks

The attempt to change the Club's constitution should be rejected. Here's why.

The current requirement to be able to vote at a club endorsement meeting is that one must be a member in good standing (with current dues paid) and have attended one prior meeting during the previous six months.

It is now proposed that one would have to attend three meetings in the prior year. **The requirement to attend three meetings** prior to

an endorsement vote is onerous. Clubs succeed which are most open and most democratic. This is not a constructive move. It is like a poll tax. It is not in the spirit of "Reform." Myrna Perez, counsel to the Brennan Center for Justice, says that various restrictions which compound voting are like hoops for voters to jump through. Instead a requirement that one be a member in good standing for, say, 60 days before an endorsement meeting, would be reasonable. In any event, amending the Club's constitution is an important matter which should be debated by the membership.

In the long run, it is not good as it further centralizes power. It is self-serving to perpetuate the entrenched. We do not have a standard for membership in the Democratic Party. People join a political party club because of an interest in the goals and ideals of the party, or they are interested in running for office or supporting someone who is running for office. No Democratic club in Manhattan has such a requirement (of three meetings prior to an endorsement vote). The norm is one or two meetings prior to such vote. It inhibits and discourages voting by newer members who join for a specific campaign.

Three Parks club member and former State Committeewoman Susan Johnson Baldwin finds it "excessive." Curtis Arluck, Broadway Democrats District Leader, says that going to three meetings is too much as it limits voter eligibility and inhibits participation. Club member Rita Kardeman, who ran Cong. Charles Rangel's Washington Heights office for many years, calls the 3-meeting requirement "preposterous." And former Manhattan Councilwoman Arlene Stringer said she never heard of such a thing. She now resides in the Bronx, and her club, the Ben Franklin club has no prior requirement. It permits any member in good standing 60 days before an endorsement to vote--much like a regular election. Ben Franklin club member Assembly member Jeff Dinowitz says that you want to encourage more participation, not less.

Additionally, new members who join next year for the Mayoral and other City-wide elections (Comptroller and Public Advocate) and also City Council, D.A., and Borough President, would have to have a perfect attendance record in order to vote in the May endorsement meeting.

The Board's elimination of the December holiday party as a meeting is ill-placed. The club, under its constitution, has a December meeting. It is not the members "fault" that the agenda is a party. (And the date is usually on a weekend when some club members would find it easier to attend.)

The change to require one third of the members to call a meeting is also excessive. Currently there are over 300 members, which would require over one hundred people to call for a special meeting, while the Board of Directors needs only about nine to call a special meeting.

Another constitutional change is for **preferential voting.** This amendment is a good thing, so that you don't have to have a second ballot later in the evening after many people have left in the event that a candidate did not receive a majority on the first ballot.

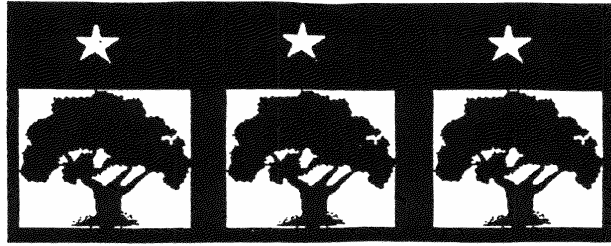
(Editor's Note: The letter listed 44 individuals as supporters.)

The New York City Labor Chorus Annual December Concert takes place on:
MONDAY, DEC. 8, at 6:00 PM
THE TEAMSTERS HALL
216 W. 14TH St. Ground Floor
ALL ARE INVITED

NY Food Pantries Almost Bare
By Cynthia Doty

One in four NYC children are living below the poverty level and more than one in five relied on soup kitchens or food pantries. With more companies laying off employees, and governments making drastic budget cuts, even more people are turning to emergency food providers just to make it through the month. The city's pantries struggle to keep up with the skyrocketing demand and all report a marked increase in first-time users and newly unemployed.

As in previous years, Three Parks will be collecting canned goods and non-perishable items at our Holiday Party for delivery to the food pantry at The Westside Campaign Against Hunger on West 86th St. Please join us as we help our neighbors in these especially troubling economic times.



THREE PARKS INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316 • New York, NY 10025 (212) 866-6378

Please pay your 2009 dues by filling out the form below and bringing it to the next meeting
Or by mailing it with your check to:

Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, N.Y. 10025
Attn: Treasurer

2009 MEMBERSHIP FORM

New Member _____

Renewal _____

Membership Category -- Check One

Individual (\$25) _____

Family -- two adults in the same household (\$40) _____

Student/Senior Citizen/Low Income (\$10) _____

Low Income Family (18) _____

Sponsor (\$50) _____ Patron (\$100) _____

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Email _____

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Please make out all checks to "Three Parks Independent Democrats - Dues 2009"

Three Parks Independent Democrats
Cathedral Station P.O. Box 1316
New York, NY 10025

HOLIDAY PARTY

Sunday, December 7th from 5:30 – 8:30 PM



Next Three Parks Meeting: Jan. 14th, 2009, 8 PM