

Turtle Bay News

A Publication of the Turtle Bay Association

Spring 2009 Vol. 52, No. 1

Bruce Silberblatt Earns 2009 OTTY Award

Bruce Silberblatt, the TBA zoning and land use chairman, has received a Community Builder award, among the 2009 Our Town Thanks You (OTTY) award honorees. No one could deserve it more.

Known as Strong Leader and Good Neighbor

Bruce, a professional builder has a commanding expertise in New York City zoning and land use issues, and a firm commitment to the community. Typical of his leadership were his warnings of zoning and safety violations at 303 East 51st Street, prior to the disastrous crane collapse at the site in March, 2008. Bruce continues to monitor that building's redesign and four other construction sites in Turtle Bay, now on hold.

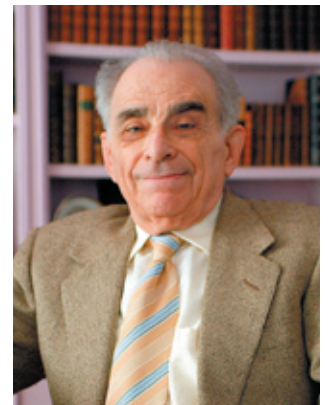
OTTY's Honor Community Leaders

The OTTY awards are a civic tribute by Our Town to Manhattan eastsiders distinguished by their outstanding service to the community. The newspaper explains that the awards "go to New Yorkers who live or work on the East Side whose accomplishments help improve its neighborhoods." This year there were 21 award recipients

over all, with Richard Ravitch named as the 2009 Eastsider of the Year. The 10 award categories are: Bravest and Finest; Charity List; Community Builder; Clergy; Culture Club; Educator; Entrepreneur; Health Care; Restaurateur Pro and Eastsider of the Year.

Published by Manhattan Media, Our Town has been an East Side presence for 30 years, and is the largest community newspaper in the area. The 2009 OTTY Awards were jointly sponsored by Our Town, Manhattan Media, and the Mount Sinai Hospital/Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

A full report on the OTTY Awards appears in Our Town, February 26, 2009. Details of the 51st Street crane collapse and its regulatory outcome are covered in the article below.



Bruce A. Silberblatt
Photo by Andrew Schwartz/Our Town.

Crane Anniversary: Looking Back, Looking Ahead

BY BRUCE A. SILBERBLATT, TBA ZONING AND LAND USE CHAIRMAN

Recently Turtle Bay marked the first anniversary of the crane calamity of March 15, 2008. The disaster shattered our community and affected its very soul and fabric. In just seconds, seven people died and two dozen were injured. The townhouse at 305 East 50th Street was crushed and other buildings damaged. Many businesses were closed and are still closed. Hundreds were forced from their homes – some not yet able to return. Our community is scarred, both physically and emotionally. It took seven deaths – plus two more at a second crane collapse – to obtain long-overdue action. The city learned, at fearful cost, the perils – particularly in construction – of hasty shortcuts rather than the safer, surer way.

At 303 East 51st Street a crane, hanging 250 feet above the street, collapsed when a six-ton component tore free and plunged down to the street taking the crane with it. The contractor had taken shortcuts and ignored safety regulations, using inadequate and damaged parts.

Since then, new leadership at the Department of Buildings (DOB) has stiffened construction safety regulations and inspections, cleaned up corruption rampant within its Cranes and Derricks section, and severely punished offenders. Now, the DOB must pre-approve procedures for crane installation; all equipment must be

scrutinized; and inspectors must supervise crane installation from beginning to end.

Beyond safety, the developer also disregarded zoning regulations, proposing a building whose design and dimensions violated requirements for the size and configuration of the lot. Incredibly, the DOB approved the plan. From the start the Turtle Bay Association protested, only to be rebuffed. Information posted on the DOB Web site was sketchy and even grossly misleading. Data about the true size, shape, location, and configuration of the building were omitted. By the date of the accident on March 15, the concrete frame had already reached the 19th floor.

Earlier that winter, well before March 15, the DOB did at last conclude that the building violated zoning requirements, but did not halt work and demand a redesign. That would have suspended building for many months and cost many millions of dollars. It was easier to let work proceed – a second shortcut. In a public hearing months after the accident, the DOB Commissioner at the time admitted that the building should not have been built. The DOB ultimately cancelled the building permit in June, 2008.

Last February, the DOB introduced major changes to the permit
continued on back page

Special Thanks To Pam Hanlon

Newsletter Editor for Past Four Years

Pam Hanlon has left her positions as newsletter editor and TBA director after dedicating four years of hard work and energy, producing four lively and informative newsletters each year. Pam's "nose for news" as a professional journalist has been a real benefit to the Association.

Beyond her responsibilities as editor, Pam wrote "Manhattan's Turtle Bay," an illustrated history of the neighborhood, its development, and its prominent residents

during the past 50 years. Published by Arcadia Publishing, the book is a unique and important source, and can be ordered using the coupon on the back page. Sales proceeds benefit the Turtle Bay Association.

The members of the Board extend their particular thanks and appreciation to Pam for her commitment, which has served the Turtle Bay Association so well. It was a particular pleasure working with her, and we wish her all the best.

Turtle Bay Association Contributes Funds

The TBA is a nonprofit, volunteer association that raises and contributes funds to local causes and services vital to the neighborhood and its residents. Our annual street fair raises funds that help support the needy, children and seniors, and the beauty and maintenance of our streets. Causes are:

- The Doe Fund (www.doe.org)
- Senior Center at Saint Peter's Church (part of Lenox Hill Neighborhood House) (www.lenoxhill.org and www.stpeters.org)
- The Vanderbilt YMCA (www.ymcanyc.org/vanderbilt)
- The Turtle Bay Tree Fund (see page 3)
- United Neighbors of East Midtown (www.unem.org)
- Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza www.hammarskjoldplaza.org

Turtle Bay Merchants Offer Discounts

The recently published "Turtle Bay Discount Directory" provides a list of high-quality neighborhood stores and restaurants offering reduced prices exclusively to TBA members. These businesses are the lifeblood of the community, and are essential in maintaining its health. When you shop or dine, consider first our neighborhood establishments. Supporting them supports us all.

Directory Updates

- **Nancy Stillpass, Appraiser** at 870 UN Plaza. Specializes in art and personal property, and offers a 10 percent discount to TBA members. Telephone: 212-644-5652, Fax: 212-486-3786. stillpass@nyc.rr.com
- **Quality Custom Framing**, 909 Second Avenue, between 48th and 49th Streets, 212-826-2693, open 7 days, 20% discount.

Community Calendar

- **Last Tuesday every month**
17th Precinct Community Council
Open Meeting, 6 p.m.
Sutton Place Synagogue
225 East 51st Street
212-826-3228
(No meetings July, August, December)
- **Second Wednesday every month**
Community Board 6
Full Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
NYU Medical Center
550 First Avenue
212-319-3750

Turtle Bay Association

224 East 47th Street
New York, NY 10017
Phone: 212-751-5465
Fax: 212-751-4941

E-mail: tbaoffice@mindspring.com
Web Site: www.turtlebaynyc.org

Check our Bulletin Board:
East side of Second Avenue,
between 48th and 49th Streets,
on outside wall of the supermarket.

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Turtle Bay News

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Contributors:
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TBA Board at Work

The following is a summary of issues and activities addressed at recent TBA Board meetings, as reflected in the meeting minutes. The TBA:

- is working closely with local elected officials and Community Board 6 to have a voice in determining the outcome of the site of the 51st Street construction crane accident, and is monitoring other ongoing neighborhood construction for safety and other concerns;
- is monitoring, with Community Board 6, and as part of the East Midtown Coalition for Sensible Development, the progress of the Con Ed Waterside

development, and United Nations renovation, as well as opportunities for East River waterfront possibilities;

- has joined with other neighborhood groups to demand stronger laws regarding newsrack placement on City sidewalks;
- continues to work to beautify the neighborhood through the TBA Tree Program and support of the Turtle Bay Tree Fund;
- sponsors or supports neighborhood events and activities, including a spring street fair, seasonal parties, and bi-annual outings for members.

Spring Update

Tree Fund Plants Locally

By BILL HUXLEY, PRESIDENT, TURTLE BAY TREE FUND

Orange tulips will adorn the 240 tree beds on East 48th, 49th, 50th and 51st Streets this spring, in place of the yellow daffodils of years past. The variety, "Orange Flair," is known for its large flowers and lengthy blooming time. These tulips also have shorter stems than most, so they are more wind and rain resistant. Look for them in mid-to-late April.

New Trees Planted

Two empty tree beds received 25-foot-tall honeylocusts last fall, thanks to combined funding by the Turtle Bay Tree Fund, 48th Street building owners, and the "MillionTreesNYC" program. Five

other trees have been planted by the city throughout the neighborhood.

About the Tree Fund

Distinct from the Turtle Bay Association, the Tree Fund is an all-volunteer group whose mission is to enhance the neighborhood with seasonal plantings and to maintain the trees, flower beds and enclosures by pruning, watering, litter-removal, and replacement on a regular basis. The Tree Fund has responsibility for nearly 280 tree beds on cross streets from 48th to 51st Streets, and raises money from neighborhood residents and those who care about street trees. It is one of the largest organizations of this type.



Flowers adorn tree bed on cross streets from 48th to 51st streets.

If you would enjoy more trees and flowers in Turtle Bay, mail your donation and suggestions to:

Turtle Bay Tree Fund
208 East 51st Street, #238
New York, NY 10022

Visit us at: www.turtlebaytreefund.org

James Brady, Celebrated Journalist, Dies

James Brady died recently after a 30-year career reporting on fashion, celebrities, and gossip. He began as a copy boy at the Daily News in New York City, later followed by positions as a columnist, editor, and celebrity interviewer in New York and Hollywood. Mr. Brady was widely published. His work appeared in Advertising Age, Crain's New York Business, Parade magazine, and The New York Post, where he helped develop Page Six. He also worked as publisher at Women's Wear Daily and editor at Harper's Bazaar. Mr. Brady wrote "The Coldest War" about his combat experiences in Korea, acclaimed among several books he authored. He was a resident of Turtle Bay and died at the age of 80.

Event Calendar

- **Sunday, May 3**
Trip to Belomont Park Raceway
Cost: \$50, including buffet luncheon, transportation, clubhouse admission, and program. Bus leaves at 10:30 a.m. from 50th Street and Second Avenue, returns at approximately 5:00 p.m. You will receive a flyer for reservations. Absolute deadline is Friday, April 17. 212-751-5465
- **Saturday May 9**
Katharine Hepburn Birthday Party
Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
212-751-5465
- **Saturday May 30**
17th Precinct Street Fair
Lexington Avenue from 42nd to 57th Streets
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
212-826-3228
- **Wednesday, June 3**
Outdoor Art Show
Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
10:00 a.m. - 3 p.m., then to Vanderbilt YMCA lobby for one week.
212-826-8980
- **Sunday, June 21**
TBA Spring Street Fair
Lexington Avenue from 42nd to 57th Streets
10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
212-751-5465
- **Tuesday, August 4**
Night Out Against Crime
Meet at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
5:00 - 9:00 p.m.
212-826-3228



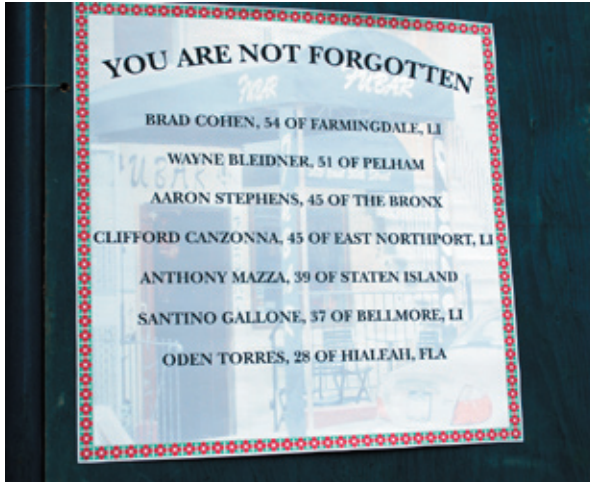
History in Turtle Bay

On February 16, 1956, the Third Avenue El was fully demolished, and thousands of spectators celebrated. The avenue, now open to the light and free of clattering subway trains, began its transformation to the Third Avenue we now know.

Source: "Manhattan's Turtle Bay. Story of a Midtown Neighborhood," Pamela Hanlon, Arcadia Publishing.



Manhattan Borough President Scott M. Stringer presides at memorial gathering.



This plaque reminds us of victims lost in the accident.



Rabbi Metzger present during the accident, addressed and led the gathering in a prayer of remembrance.



Liz Kreuger, New York State Senator for the 26th District, joins in honoring those who died and the survivors.

Community Gathers for Crane Collapse Memorial

Turtle Bay residents and elected officials assembled on March 15, 2009 to mark the anniversary of the crane disaster at 51st Street and Second Avenue, a year ago. On a chilly and damp Sunday, the crowd met at the now empty site, on 50th Street, of the town house destroyed in the accident. Scott A. Stringer, Manhattan Borough President, led the meeting and spoke in honor of those lost. He emphasized the priority of building safety in the city, and the stringent new regulations adopted following this and another crane accident in 2008. He also stressed that “Despite our progress, we can never relax our efforts to see that such incidents will not happen again.”

Other speakers included New York State Senator for the 26th District, Liz Krueger; Assemblyman, 73rd Assembly District, Jonathan Bing; and Manhattan Council Member, 5th District, Jessica Lappin, whose constituencies include Turtle Bay. Bruce A. Silberblatt, vice president of the Turtle Bay Association, and a driving force behind the fight for renewed safety regulations, also addressed the group, followed by three accident survivors.

Jessica Lappin sponsored four crane safety bills, now enacted. Speaking of challenges ahead she said, “Now we need greater enforcement, continued efforts to combat corruption, and reform within the construction industry.”



Survivors John and Juan receive honors from Turtle Bay residents.



Jonathan Bing and Bruce Silberblatt meet following the speeches.



Assemblyman Jonathan Bing, representing the 73rd Assembly District, addresses the crowd.



Survivor Juan at the wall of flowers placed by saddened community residents.



Jessica Lappin speaks to Turtle Bay neighbors, joined by Scott Stringer and John an accident survivor.



Listeners gather round as Bruce Silberblatt speaks of the disaster and the regulatory changes it forced.



John LaGreco, former owner of the destroyed restaurant, Fubar, remembers March 15.



Valentine Party Wins Hearts and Flowers

By all accounts, the TBA's annual Valentine celebration this past March was a hit. Ninety guests, including Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, District 5 Council Member Jessica Lappin, and District 4 Council Member Dan Garodnick, enjoyed the buffet and lively conversation. TBA members were in good spirits as they sang, danced and socialized, and those who won door prizes were delighted with their gifts. Caterina's Restaurant, on 53rd Street between First and Second Avenues, provided good food, a celebration cake, and the ideal atmosphere for fun.



Art & Culture

Trygve Lie Gallery. Paintings and drawings of Anki King, prominent Norwegian-American artist. Through Sun., April 26. Mon-Thurs., 12-7 p.m., Fri.-Sun. 1-5 p.m. at the Norwegian Church, 317 East 52nd Street, between First and Second Avenues. 212-319-0370, or www.trygveliegallery.com. Open to public; free.

Music at Saint Bartholomew's. *Choir of Canterbury Cathedral.* Hear one of England's oldest and most renowned choirs, whose history stems from 1483. Thurs.,

April 23 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$35/\$25; \$25/\$15, students and seniors. Reserve at church box office, Park Ave, and 51st St., or online at www.stbarts.org.

St. Bartholomew's Chorister Festival Evensong. Annual, non-denominational service. Features children's choirs from the tri-state area and music from the Tudor period to the present, accompanied by the city's largest pipe organ. Sun., May 31 at 5:00 p.m. Free. St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. and 51st Street, 212-378-0248, www.stbarts.org.

Midtown Jazz At Midday. Lunch and listen to featured artists. Every Wed., 1:00 p.m. in the Living Room of Saint

Peter's Church, Lexington Avenue at 54th Street. Suggested donation \$7. Bring lunch.

"KRAZY! The Delirious World of Animé + Manga + Video Games."

Exhibit of influential contemporary visual art at Japan Society. Through Sun., June 14. \$12; \$10 seniors. Free each Fri. from 6-9 p.m. 333 East 47th Street. Info: 212-832-1155 or www.japan-society.org.

"Tora-san, Our Lovable Tramp". The hero in these films is always in a fix and always funny. "Hearts and Flowers for Tora-san," Friday, April 17, 7:30 p.m.; "Tora-san, My Uncle," Friday, May 22, 7:30 p.m. \$11 non-members; \$7 seniors and students. Reserve tickets at www.japansociety.org.

Legislation News

Two Garodnick Bills Become Law

Mayor Mike Bloomberg signed two bills on March 5, 2009 authored by Council Member Dan Garodnick. One law creates the first bill of rights for car service passengers, and the other safeguards New Yorkers' drinking water by bringing transparency to the inspections of building water tanks.

Under the water protection law, owners must make water tank inspection reports available within five days of a resident's request. The previous law expressly prohibited the public from viewing water tank inspection reports, even with a subpoena.

The bill of rights for car service passengers clarifies and expands their protections. Key points include the right to be driven in a car that has passed all required inspections, by a driver whose license information is on display, and who does not use a cell phone. Additionally, passengers are protected from being quoted a fare by a dispatcher, only to have a driver charge a higher rate. For details on these and other legislation, visit www.garodnick.com.

Plaque Commemorates Vonnegut

A memorial to Kurt Vonnegut has been installed on a bench at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, thanks to his wife, author and photographer, Jill Krementz, Council Member Dan Garodnick, TBA board members, and the New York City Department of Parks.

The plaque, located at the middle of the Plaza, at 47th Street between First and Second Avenues, is a fitting reminder for those of us who knew Mr. Vonnegut from the neighborhood, as well as those who grew up with and loved his books. Mr. Vonnegut died in April, 2007, at the age of 84, after more than 30



Bench plaque at Dag Hammarskjold Plaza commemorates Vonnegut.

years as an active resident of Turtle Bay. Though gone, he is never forgotten.

City Stiffens Construction Laws

DOB Actions

- Addressed and cleaned up corruption in its Cranes and Derricks section;
- Severely punished those who violated regulations;
- Admitted mistakes in the safety, zoning and permit approval processes;
- Revoked the 51st Street site's building permit, halting construction.

Site Safety

- Builders must submit detailed procedures for crane installation to the DOB for pre-approval;
- Inspectors must personally supervise the entire process of crane installation, including raising and lowering;
- All equipment and parts must be thoroughly examined and approved before use;
- Steel, not nylon, cable slings are required.

Zoning and Permit Approval

- Developers must submit building plan diagrams showing the configuration, placement, height, and size of the proposed project;
- Developers must wait 30 days before they may begin construction to allow for public review of, and possible objection to, the design.

Transparency

- The DOB Web site must post, for public information, the diagram for the building's design.

Regulatory Gaps Still Remaining

- Thirty days for review of building plans is insufficient for the public to review, raise possible objections, and initiate hearings on a project;
- Citizens are not familiar with zoning; they must rely on experts (sometimes paid) to evaluate any specific building plan;
- Experts are needed to write up resolutions, in the proper format with technical references;
- The DOB Web site requires daily monitoring to keep abreast of specific projects;
- Web postings are not readily accessible to citizens who have no computers.



Children in the Strong Kids Campaign at the Vanderbilt YMCA perform for their teachers and YMCA contributors in mid-February. The TBA contributes to the Vanderbilt Y.

Newsworthy Notes

Temporary Branch Library In Turtle Bay.

This spring The Grand Central Branch Library will open at 135 East 46th Street. It will circulate fiction and non-fiction as well as video and audio recordings. It will also house Teen Central, which moved from the Donnell Library Center currently under renovation. The temporary branch will close when the Donnell reopens in 2012. Learn about the library's building plans and the branches in temporary possession of the Donnell's holdings at <http://www.nypl.org/branch/central/dlc/newbuilding.html>.

The Future Beneath Us. This two-location exhibition, sponsored jointly by The New York Transit Museum and the New York Public Library, explores the city's eight massive infrastructure projects in the 21st Century. Learn about how they will affect your life as a New Yorker. Through July 5 at the library's main branch and in the shuttle passage off Grand Central Terminal. For more information, visit www.grandcentralterminal.com.

Men In Blue Go Green. The Doe Fund's RWA ("Ready, Willing & Able") Resource Recovery initiative provides free pickups

of waste cooking oil, and offers food service establishments fully-licensed and insured services that guarantee compliance with New York City regulations. All oil collected is recycled into premium grade biodiesel. To learn more about this initiative, visit www.rwaresourcerecovery.org.

Be An Architect. You can build your own Chrysler Building with a free diagram of a paper model. This fun project is available at www.papertoys.com/chrysler-building.htm.

Crane Anniversary *continued from page 1*

approval process. Developers must now present a diagram showing the configuration, placement, height, and size of their project and, upon approval, post it on the DOB Web site.

The public has 30 days in which to file a formal objection before the developer can begin construction. The DOB has taken an important step to improve transparency, providing information previously known only to the DOB and the real estate industry.

The DOB, however, while improving public access, has not provided the public with a meaningful ability to object. The 30-day review time is far too short. Only experts (who may charge for their services) can evaluate a design. If objections arise, there

Volunteer Wanted For Turtle Bay Office

Help with membership entries, answer telephone, coordinate mailings.

Three days a week.
Flexible hours.

Call 212-751-5465

is too little time to initiate review, hold community board hearings, and draft resolutions that meet technical standards. Right now, although citizens can appeal the DOB's decisions at any time during construction, builders remain virtually free from public influence. We have made a good start, but there is much work ahead.

Report Construction Concerns

Call 311; the 17th Precinct (weekdays 212-826-3228; 212-826-3211 on weekends and evenings); Community Board 6 (212-319-3750); and TBA (212-751-5465, tbaoffice@mindspring.com). Or:

- State Senator Liz Krueger
(212-490-9535), liz@lizkrueger.com
- Assemblyman Jonathan Bing
(212-605-0937), bingj@assembly.state.ny.us
- Manhattan Borough President
Scott Stringer
(212-669-7877), bp@manhattanbp.org
- Councilmember Jessica Lappin
(212-980-1808), lappin@council.nyc.ny.us



TBA MEMBERSHIP COUPON

Yes, I want to join the Turtle Bay Association
to help support our community's quality of life.

Annual Membership Dues

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacesetter \$250 |

Name _____

Address _____ Apt _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

E-mail _____

☐ I would like to become more involved in TBA activities.

Please make your check payable to Turtle Bay Association.

Mail to: Turtle Bay Association, 224 E. 47th St., New York, NY 10017

BOOK ORDER FORM

Manhattan's Turtle Bay Story of a Midtown Neighborhood

A Contemporary History of Turtle Bay
Arcadia Publishing • 160 pages; 50 photos

\$15 for TBA members • \$20 for non-members

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ for ____ book/s,
plus \$3 per book for postage/handling

Make check payable to Turtle Bay Association
Mail to: Turtle Bay Association, 224 East 47th Street,
New York, NY 10017

Sales Proceeds Benefit the Turtle Bay Association