

# Next meeting: Feb. 13 at 8:00 PM

**This Meeting is held at the Living Hope Christian Church on Braddock Avenue at 241<sup>st</sup> Street**

## Creedmoor Civic News

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CREEDMOOR CIVIC ASSOCIATION, INC.  
Founded 1927, Incorporated 1938

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### VAN BUREN H.S. REPORTS IMPROVEMENTS

Martin Van Buren High School has received a good report card on efforts to turn it around.

The school had seen years of neglect and poor performance prior to the start of Sam Sochet's tenure as Principal in 2012. In November 2014, The NYC Dept of Education designated 94 schools, including Van Buren, as "Renewal Schools." These schools were given additional resources, including medical and mental health services, after school programs and support from community-based organizations, in an effort to improve performance.

In July of 2015, the NYS Education Department named 124 schools in New York State, including Van Buren, as "struggling schools." These schools were given two years to show significant improvement or face receivership.

At a press conference on January 3, Principal Sochet announced that, during the 2015-2016 academic year, MVB had exceeded requirements on all 10 benchmarks that the State uses to measure progress. These included improvements in attendance, graduation rates, Regents completion, and college readiness. Next, the State will evaluate progress made during the 2016-2017 school year. If the school again exceeds requirements in 7 of the 10 benchmarks, it will avoid being placed in receivership.

Principal Sochet, while proud of accomplishments to date, emphasized that he and his staff have more work to do. "Education, when it's done right, is a team sport," he said. "I am cognizant and reflective of the work that still needs to be done to move Martin Van Buren from being a



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struggling school. Not only can it be done here, but these results can be replicated elsewhere."

One of the new initiatives at MVB is the use four "Small Learning Communities," or SLC's. One SLC includes the 9<sup>th</sup> graders who are new to the school. Others are the English Language Learners (aka the Ambassadors), Pre-Law and Humanities, Health Care/Pre-Engineering.

Community partners include the Northwell Health Care System, the Justice Resource Center, and the law firm Winston and Strawn, LLP. There is an active School Leadership Team, which includes involvement from members of the community. The Robotics Team has been very competitive in citywide competitions.

Because of the exciting new programs being offered, Van Buren has been able to slowly increase its student body drawn from our local community.

Also, under Sam Sochet's leadership, the Parents Association is once again functioning.

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## Creedmoor Civic News

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## 105 PRECINCT CRIME DOWN

105 Pct Commander Jeffrey Schiff announced that 2016 saw the lowest overall crime rate in the 105<sup>th</sup> Pct since CompStat began in the early 1990's. Comparing 2016 with 2015, overall crime was down 12%, and was down in every major category. 2014 had been the best year, but it was surpassed by 2015 and 2016. To provide more historical context, there was 1 murder in the precinct in 2016, compared to 33 in 1994 and 18 in 2001. There were 11 shooting incidents in 2016 vs 16 in 2015. At the same time that crime is rapidly dropping, Inspector Schiff reported that the number of complaints against officers in 2016 was 25% lower than in 2015.

Because the precinct is so large, traffic incidents take up a lot of resources. There were 6,687 accidents in the precinct last year, resulting in 10 fatalities, including 6 pedestrians. Injuries from accidents were up 17% from 2015. Officers issued 11,120 summonses for moving violations, up 10% from 2015. Vision Zero summonses were up 27%. Insp. Schiff stated that there will seat belt enforcement by officers over the next several months, and the NYPD is working with insurance companies to identify lawyers and medical practitioners who may be involved in fraud related to injury claims.

1640 summonses were issued in 2016 for illegal overnight parking of commercial vehicles, a condition that civic leaders and other community members have long been complaining about. Inspector Schiff reported that the Queens Borough Command is awaiting the delivery of 2 new heavy duty tow trucks.

Sgt. Bauer and Sgt. Lamage from the Domestic Violence Unit spoke. They said that domestic violence occurs between any people who have some sort of relationship. Anyone can be a victim. Elder abuse is domestic violence.

Often, people don't call 911 because they don't want the perpetrator to be arrested. An important resource is the Queens Family Justice Center, located at 126-02 82 Ave, Kew Gardens. Hours are Mon-Fri 9-5. Call 311 to be connected. Services include counseling, legal advice and case management. Police officers and are also available to take reports.

A skimming device was found attached to a cash machine at the TD Ameritrade Bank on Jamaica Ave and 210 St. About 30 people used the machine with the device attached. Insp Schiff said that if you see a suspicious device attached to a cash machine, leave it alone and notify police or bank staff.

Five holiday baskets were made up and distributed to needy families in the 105<sup>th</sup> Pct. Six were distributed last year, but there were fewer donations this year. CCA sent a \$100 donation after a vote was taken at the November meeting.

The 113 Pct. in Jamaica is collecting prom attire for young men and women. If you wish to donate any gently used prom outfits, contact Sgt. Clarke at 917-681-5426, or call the 113 Pct Community Affairs Unit at 718-712-1627.

## President's Message

**We are happy to report good news on several fronts in this newsletter. At the last 105<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council meeting, Inspector Schiff reported that crime in 2016 was the lowest since detailed statistics were first compiled under the CompStat program in the mid 1990's. Insp Schiff often credits the community for their help in being the eyes and ears of the NYPD. Thanks to the officers of the 105<sup>th</sup> for their great work! The area around the Cross Island Parkway looks great, thanks to actions taken by Council Member Grodenchik. Finally, Martin Van Buren High School is making significant improvements. These are the types of things that civic associations work for: safe, clean neighborhoods and good schools.**

**Our January meeting and party were canceled due to bad weather. We will hold the party at our February 13 meeting with a Valentine's Day theme. We hope you can join us for good food and live music.**

**Mark your calendars: We will celebrate the Creedmoor Civic Association's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a party on May 6 at Queens Farm Museum. More details will follow in the coming months.**

Your neighbor,

*Michael O'Keefe*

## QUEENS CIVIC CONGRESS RETOOLS

The Queens Civic Congress, of which Creedmoor Civic is an original and founding member, has a new president: Kevin Forrestal, president of the Hillcrest Estates Civic Association. It is currently working on several projects, one being to entice the youth of Queens into the realm of civics, and the other is to revamp its outdated web page. The students will help to open the doors of social media to QCC.

# MEMORIES OF A SMALL TOWN

by *Walter Audubon*

*Walter Audubon has lived on 238 St for almost 80 years, first in his parents' house, and later on in a home he bought on the same block. He still lives there today with his son, Billy. Walter was active in the Creedmoor Civic Association. He helped us several years ago by scanning old newsletters so they could be posted on our website, [www.creedmoorcivic.org](http://www.creedmoorcivic.org). Billy told us that Walter is recovering from some medical issues, but he still reads our newsletter every month.*

*Walter wrote this story about 10 years ago about our neighborhood in the first few years of its existence. It is posted on our website. We are reprinting this as we look forward to the celebration of the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Creedmoor Civic Association, which will take place on May 6 at the Queens Farm Museum. We hope you can join us!*

Our family moved to Bellerose from Queens Village in 1938, during the Great Depression. Many people were unemployed and some resorted to selling apples on the streets. My father was a foreign tax accountant for the old American Express Company, and was fortunate enough to be retained during this terrible period. The homes on my block had been built in 1927-28 but some people couldn't afford to buy these mostly wood frame houses, so they were rented from banks or mortgage companies. Today most of the houses are owned. In the 1940s most homes were heated with coal and a furnace. The buildings had coal bins in the basements and coal chutes with an outside entry, for deliveries from Frank R. Smith coal yards a short distance down Rocky Hill Road (later paved and called Braddock Avenue). The coal dust filtered thru much of the basement, and we had to make regular visits there to shovel coal in the furnace. It was very dirty work and the heating changes later to oil and gases were welcome ones!

The houses had a compartment built into one side of them for milk receptacles. Early each morning the Renken man's milk wagon and horse could be heard clop, clopping down the street to make deliveries. Unfortunately, the horse would often make his own unsanitary delivery in the street! Around noon every weekday the Krug bakery truck would come through to take care of its customers. As a boy I marveled at the little noise it made, and was told it was an electric-powered vehicle. Regularly each day Romanelli's junk wagon would pass my house, seeking items that had been discarded for sanitation pick-up. Finally, there was the Italian fruit and vegetable truck offering fresh items daily, as well as a chance for neighbors to have friendly chats.

Neighborhood stores were conveniently located just a block away on Braddock Avenue. On the corner was Mittleman's candy store, where a candy bar cost a nickel

and a tiny box of two Top's chiclets could be purchased for a penny. Next door was the German butcher who sold all kinds of fresh meats, butter, and eggs. Then came Galati's shoe repair where one could get shoes fixed at reasonable prices. Most soles and heels were of leather as the artificial materials used today were unknown then. Following Galati's was Seekamp's delicatessen, serving all kinds of hot and cold foods. Just after that was the German bakery, selling various fresh baked goods. Near the corner was Casey's Bohack, a large grocery store managed by Tom Casey. During the Christmas season the air was filled with the pleasant smell of spruce trees, stacked for sale at the entrance, along with peppermint candy canes and little green tree-shaped, mint flavored candies. Immediately on and around the corner of the block was Phillips' drugstore. Finally, on the side street adjoining the candy store was Nick's barber shop, where one could obtain a haircut or a shave. Almost all of the necessary goods and services were in one place.

In spite of the Depression, our area was then in the early stages of development. Many corner lots on Braddock Avenue were for sale. On one corner of our street was a huge lot extending an entire block between 238th and 237th Street. As young children we enjoyed climbing high on the big advertising billboard that stood alone on the property. A well-worn path allowed us to take a shortcut to our stores. And occasionally my friends and I would play a game of touch football on the lot. Today that lot is the site of the Bellerose Post Office. The opposite corner was occupied by vacant stores, containing broken windows, and a great deal of dust and dirt, and an open invitation to curious children like me. The site has long since been rebuilt into a brick building containing apartments.

During the early forties, notwithstanding the effects of World War II, there were many sources of recreation and  
*(Continued on page 4)*

## **BRADDOCK PHARMACY**

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entertainment for youngsters. There were many weeded vacant lots along Braddock Avenue where we could play Cowboys and Indians, or explore an abandoned concrete foundation in one area. At the east end of Braddock stood the Bellerose Theatre, where regularly on Saturday matinees one could see a full-length motion picture, a cartoon, and an exciting 15-minute serial that always left us anticipating the next chapter--- all for just 25 cents!

Occasionally, after church on Sundays, our grandpa would take us in his new Hudson automobile to watch the small propeller-driven planes take off and land at Roosevelt Field, where years earlier aviator Charles Lindbergh had taken off for his famous transatlantic flight to Paris.

Television had not yet appeared and the main source of indoor entertainment was that electronic wonder, the radio. After school each weekday, in the late afternoon and evening, my ears would be glued to the speaker of our old RCA standing in the living room. I would listen to serials such as Terry and the Pirates, Jack Armstrong, and Sky King, announced by a young man named Mike Wallace, the very same one who later became a famous television journalist. The serials were broadcast with commercials by the large cereal and soap companies of the day. To keep the attention of their young listeners from time to time they would offer incentives related to the story lines, requesting box tops and a small sum for postage. Among these were the Captain Midnight decoding ring and Jack Armstrong Tru-flight model airplanes, all of which are now collectors' items worth much more than their original cost. Some of the comic strips of the day mirrored the characters of these radio serials.

With the exception of a brief aborted landing at Amagansett, Long Island had no direct contact with the war going on in Europe. However, we were subjected to government rationing, in the form of food and gasoline stamps. Additionally, people were asked to return bacon fat to our local butchers, for use in the war effort. But the single thing I remember most was the seemingly endless drone of military planes flying night after night over my home. Some nights, sleep was impossible. And as a young boy I always had the fear that one of them might fall from the sky and crash into my house.


There have been many changes in Bellerose during the past seventy years. The radio has been largely displaced by television. The old telephones are being replaced by cell

phones. The garages are used almost exclusively for storage rather than automobiles, making street parking a nightmare. Neighbors use machines to dry clothing rather than the old clotheslines in the rear yards. Propeller-driven commercial planes have been replaced by jets that fly faster and carry many more passengers. Large shopping malls nearby have provided overwhelming competition for small local shops. Finally, the ethnic make-up of the area has changed drastically. Early emigrants from western Europe have passed away or moved on, and have been replaced by newer residents from Latin America and Asia.

## *WHERE HAS ALL THE GARBAGE GONE?*

You may have noticed how clean the Cross Island Parkway service road has been recently. The litter problem there came to the attention of Council Member Barry Grodenchik from complaints voiced at our civic meetings. He arranged for Wildcat Service Corp to provide trash pickup. Funding comes from the NYC Cleanup Initiative, which was set up by the City Council to fund private or non-profit groups that perform cleaning services. Wildcat is a non-profit whose mission includes job training and job placement for young persons and ex-offenders. Thanks!



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