



# Western Queens Gazette

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## ZONE 1

- Astoria
- Ditmars
- Dutch Kills
- E. Elmhurst
- Hunter's Point
- Sunnyside
- Woodside
- LaG Airport
- L.I. City
- Jackson Heights
- N. Corona
- Ravenswood
- Roosevelt Island
- Steinway

## what's inside...

- Senior Spotlight page 18
- Eye on Politics page 20
- Restaurant Review page 48

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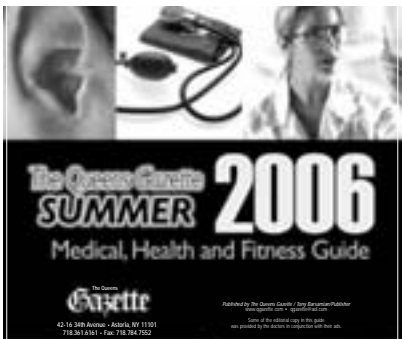
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### Tom Manton



**Dies At 73**  
See page 15

### Medical Section



**Summer 2006**  
See page 23

### Lost Trolleys



**Of Queens**  
See page 47

# What Happened, Con Ed?



Photo Vinny DuPre

**One of many manholes that exploded throughout Astoria, Long Island City, Hunters Point, Woodside and Sunnyside as feeder cables burned and electrical power to more than 10,000 homes and businesses was cut off.**

#### BY JOHN TOSCANO

As the Northwest Queens power blackout moved relentlessly into its second week, with very slow progress in repairing the damage, Con Edison reported yesterday the number of homes without power had dwindled to 1,000, but the utility did not have a timetable for when the entire area would get its power restored.

In another development, Governor George Pataki, who has pretty much been on the sidelines during the breakdown, said in a letter to Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez (D-Queens/Brooklyn) that he was appalled at Con Ed's slow response and said he had not taken any action to try to remedy the situation because Mayor Michael Bloomberg had not made the necessary formal declaration of an emergency

that is needed for the governor to act.

Meanwhile, the virtually universal call for public hearings to try to determine why Con Ed was taking so long to restore power to almost 100,000 people bore fruit as Assemblymember Michael Gianaris announced the Assembly will hold a public hearing at La Guardia Community College on Monday, July 31. Final details are yet to be worked out, he said.

All last week, local lawmakers issued frantic calls for federal, state, and city agencies to investigate the causes of the blackout and to shed light on the power failure that struck Astoria, Long Island City, Woodside, Sunnyside and Hunters Point 11 days ago.

At first, Con Ed said the power failure involved only slightly more than 1,000

customers—customers meaning buildings, not individuals. The utility gradually raised the figure to 10,000 and eventually to about 100,000. Hundreds of businesses as well as house and apartment dwellers, were also victims of the blackout. With the sharp drop in shoppers, many are facing bankruptcy.

The blackout left the stricken communities with no light, no refrigeration, tons of spoiled food and no air-conditioning to deal with soaring temperatures.

As the Red Cross was called in and other emergency measures were taken, hundreds of electrical power technicians were imported from nearby cities to assist Con Ed workers in repairing feeder cables.

The project required workers to go

See page 16

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