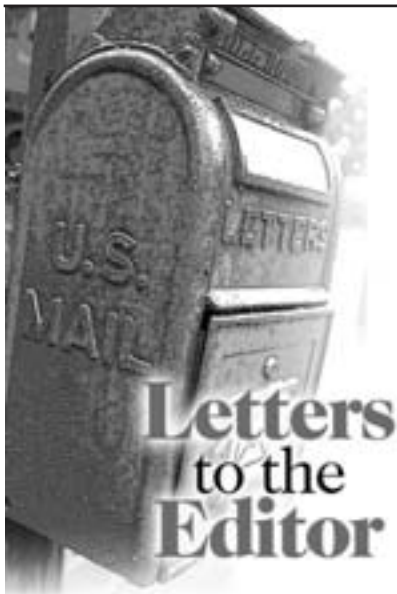


# Editorial

## Season Promises Better Days To Come

There are moments that make us pause and reflect on the wonder underlying the celebrations and rituals of the season.

As is the case every year, this holiday season gives us a reason for hope and belief in brighter, better days to come. Whatever your faith, whatever your religion—if, indeed, you follow one—however you celebrate, we wish you joy at this holiday time. May you have all the joy this time of year can bring. We wish all of you, our readers, the very best of holiday seasons and a healthy and prosperous new year. You, our readers, are a year-long, lasting gift to us. We hope that you welcome each issue of this newspaper into your lives all year long as well.



### Thanks For The Party

To The Editor:

I am very proud of the Astoria community and all personnel that participate in the 114th Precinct Children's Christmas Party every year. It is a resounding success and a fulfilling feeling to see the reactions of the children and families who are in need of, and appreciate, this event.

I would personally appreciate if you would mention in the media the following special people who are an integral part of this important event:

- Ann Bruno, 114th Precinct Community Council president
- Police Officers Paul Chatham and Joseph Modlin, 114th Precinct Community Affairs
- Police Officer Suzanne Lowney, Patrol Borough Queens North
- Sergeant Dwayne Palmer, our very own little elf, from Patrol Borough Queens North

In closing, a sincere and respectful thank you to retired Detective Lynda Marmara, who participated for many years and continues to return after her retirement.

Respectfully,  
Brian McCarthy  
Inspector

114th Precinct Commanding Officer

*Editor's Note: The 2006 114th Precinct Christmas Party was held at Astoria World Manor on Saturday, December 2. Some 200 children and their parents attended.*

### Christmas Memories

To The Editor:

Christmas is almost here and there is much for most of us to do, gifts to buy and to wrap, a few more cards to send, even a few more decorations to put up. It is also a time to reflect about the troubles in the world, like the ongoing war in Iraq and more of our brave soldiers dying, not to mention terrorist acts on innocent people. We can't help but wonder about the message of the season which is "peace on earth and good will toward men", yet where is it?

It is in times like these that I think a lot of us perhaps reflect on a gentler time in our past. I for one, found myself thinking of a Christmas past of long ago when I was young and America was not so troubled. Which takes me back to 1957, where we were in the Cold War and I didn't care nor understand such things, for I was eight years old at the time. I was living in a house on 213th Street in Queens Village. There was my mother and father, two blind boarders my mother took care of, plus a cat named Patty and a small Irish terrier named Taffy. We didn't have a lot of money, but we always had a good Christmas. It was always full of love and sharing and plenty of music, especially during the holidays, for my mother loved music, and often said music is tonic for the soul.

We had a tradition, like a lot of families do, and that was to go out a few days before Christmas and buy a live Christmas tree. The night my father and I were about to go out for the tree my father's car wouldn't start. It was a cold, crisp night with snow falling pretty heavily and leaving a nice blanket of the white stuff on the ground. My father had an idea so my mother wouldn't be disappointed. We would take my sled to the place where they sold Christmas trees and wreaths, about a mile from the house on Jamaica Avenue and Francis Lewis Boulevard. When we got there, my father picked out this beautiful 6-foot tree. He then tied it on top of my sled and we took it home in the snow and sang some Christmas carols as we walked through the snow. It was truly a time to remember, just my dad and me. We finally arrived at the house where my mother had a special place in the living room across from the fireplace which had many Christmas cards attached to the mantle for our Christmas tree. Our job was done once it was in place and put in its stand and my mother now could decorate the tree, which she did with much love and dedication to every detail.

It was a time when kindness and love seemed to bounce from house to house and neighbors would greet each other with a Merry Christmas. Carolers would go from block to block singing, churches would be teeming with worshippers and bells could be heard ringing in the distance. I remember myself singing in the choir at Grace Lutheran Church in Queens Village Christmas Eve and being in a Christmas pageant where I played a shepherd the week before. I think Christmas meant a lot back then and not so commercial. I just hope that this Christmas that people will truly remember and reflect what Christmas is all about and that is giving and sharing to those in need like the homeless and the hungry. We should, I think, return to family values and to be good to one another and truly live out the true meaning of Christmas which is "peace on earth and good will toward men".

Sincerely yours,  
Frederick R. Bedell Jr.  
Bellerose

### Thanks The Publisher

To The Editor:

Merry Christmas!

Your newspaper is an important voice for the Astoria community.

Most newspapers wish they had an excellent staff such as the *Gazette* [does].

[Publisher Tony Barsamian's] support was important to me and my committee [the U.S. 2010 Census Hellenic Steering Committee of N.Y. State] in 1998, when we received federal recognition of the Greek language, and in New York City, a supplemental Greek voter registration form, and on the subways, public announcements in Greek: "Don't Smoke On the Platform or Train".

People in Astoria all state that Tony Barsamian is honorable and a gentleman. That is my opinion also.

Sincerely,  
Athán John Christodoulou  
Chairman

U.S. 2010 Census Hellenic Steering Committee of N.Y. State

### Rates Access-A-Ride C-

To The Editor:

At last month's City Council hearing on Access-A-Ride, the MTA's program for New Yorkers with disabilities that prevent them from using buses and subways for some or all of their trips, New York City Transit officials insisted all is well with the paratransit program.

Access-A-Ride now provides over three million rides, a long way from the days when empty vans plied the city's streets. But it has a long way to go.

Queens senior service providers operate more than 100 vans, which with little public funding, provide limited transportation to centers, medical appointments and shopping. But they do not have the resources to provide for the everyday transportation needs required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. For many seniors with disabilities, the only choice is Access-A-Ride.

For many seniors with disabilities, who make up 65 per cent of Access-A-Ride's ridership, the service is a lifeline between isolation and at least a limited degree of taking care of themselves.

Riders--young and old--complain of long waits, especially for return trips. Seniors, especially, become so fearful of being stranded that they give up on the service altogether. Riders routinely report hours long, circuitous trips that take them through two or more boroughs before reaching their destination. For seniors with cognitive disorders, these problems with Access-A-Ride can be insurmountable.

Queens Access-A-Ride customers also tell us that their eligibility for service limits their destinations either to Queens only or to the other boroughs only. For a senior who is unable to use subways or buses, the message is clear: stay home.

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