

1963...
From page 15

daily in this proposed plant." Moreover, he continued, the psychological effect of the plant would sharply curb the growth of the borough. "The mental fear will discourage people from becoming Queens residents and will retard the borough's development," he said. Although his remarks expressed concern about nearby industry and residential development, no mention was made about the safety of residents already living around the plant.

An East Elmhurst group charged in a letter to the mayor that three white youths in Astoria painted a black youth's face white. Police arrested the three youths, two 13 years old and one 15 years old, and they were held for action in Family Court. The assaulted youth, Robert Smith, 12, a student at J.H.S. 141 in Astoria, was one of 130 students transferred from J.H.S. 127 in East Elmhurst where he lived. At the time of the transfer, a number of the students and parents from Astoria boycotted the school, charging that the transfer was reverse discrimination.

Mayor Robert Wagner and Dr. Calvin Gross, superintendent of schools, were notified of the bias incident by a committee headed by a teacher, Mrs. Helen Marshall of East Elmhurst. The committee also charged that the black students were being "chased out of the school area by gangs of white boys" and that in the previous week, a garbage can cover was thrown at one youth.

Marshall would later embark in a suc-

cessful political career that led her to Albany and the City Council and ultimately the borough president's office.

Billy Graham met Moses. It happened on April 17 at the World's Fair groundbreaking for the Billy Graham Pavilion. Amid a chilly morning temperature in the low 50s and wind whipped dust, Billy Graham met with the president of the World's Fair, Robert Moses. "Did you ever think you'd get to meet Moses?" a reporter quipped to the evangelist. Graham broke into laughter. He compared Bob Moses with the first Moses and said: "He's much like the biblical Moses. He has the same dynamic drive, moral convictions and the ability to get things done." During the fair, he planned to hold prayer meetings in the new Mets Stadium. "Maybe the atmosphere of prayer within the stadium will help the Mets play better baseball; they can use the help," he joked.

Local residents gave thumbs down to the open-air design for the unenclosed overpass at Queens Plaza. Their complaints, that the unroofed design left commuters open to rain and snow, fell on deaf ears. The transit authority pointed out that the plans were developed by borough hall and in any event, a simple open design was part of the IRT's program of replacing the elaborate kiosk entrances with sleek open-air stairs and passages.

The site of the old Elmhurst Courthouse probably would become a sitting park after demolition of the building at Broadway and Justice. The onetime Elmhurst Town Hall,

which last housed the Second District Municipal Court, was considered a fire hazard. Borough President Cariello, who had sat as a judge in that court many years, sealed its doom when he said, "To fireproof the building would be prohibitive."

However, the future of Flushing Town Hall might be different. The building on Northern Boulevard and Linden Street was also a "retired" courthouse, but it had caught the eye of the Landmarks Commission, which planned to block any plans to tear it down. Officials mulled its future as a converted a teen center or a senior center.

When Al Siegel was a 17-year-old, a monkey shook his hand and changed his life. Ever since that day, he was an organ grinder. As the last licensed organ grinder in New York City, his future was in doubt, for his monkey was dead. And Al didn't know if the city was willing to renew his license.

What worried Siegel even more was where he could get a monkey as smart as Bobby, who died the past weekend of "sugar diabetes", ending a primate-primate partnership that lasted more than 20 years. Siegel sobbed, "He was my life. Whatever Bobby wanted I gave him. Meat, vegetables, ice cream, candy, I gave him everything. Bobby slept with me every night. I loved him like a son."

Siegel thought of the tricks his 14-inch buddy used to do and he broke into tears. "I tell Bobby, 'act like Mae West,' and he puts powder on his face and a wig on his head and walks like, you know, like Mae West. I tell him to shake hands with the kiddies and

he does it. How am I going to find another one like him?"

Siegel said he didn't know how to do anything else. The pair had appeared on many television shows, carnivals and at Freedomland. They met the famous of the world. "Everybody shook his hand, governors, mayors, everybody."

Siegel planned to bury his friend in his back yard in Howard Beach "I don't care if it's against the law or not. I'll invite all his friends and we will bury Bobby. It is the least I could do."

That's the way it was in April 1963!

On May 7, 2007, at 7 p.m. examine the past when the society, in conjunction with the New York State Council for the Humanities, presents special guest Dr. Christopher Ricciardi, an archeologist for the Army Corps of Engineers, who will talk on "The Archaeological History of New York City". Attend a fascinating excursion embracing the span of time from the age of Native Americans to the dawn of the twentieth century. For more information, call the Greater Astoria Historical Society at 718-278-0700 or visit www.astorialic.org. Funding provided in part by city Councilmember Peter Vallone and the city Department of Cultural Affairs.

The Society is open to the public on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Quinn's Gallery, 4th Floor, 35-20 Broadway, Long Island City. For more information, contact the Greater Astoria Historical Society at 718-728-0700 or visit www.astorialic.org.

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