

Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

RU Walking?

COURTNEY MCBRIDE

And they're off! Rockefeller Walks returned for its third year on campus with more enthusiasm than ever. This year's competition included 274 participants, three levels of competition, 21 days of walking, and a whole lot of trash talk!

This year we tried something new by offering three levels of competition. Our intention was to create an inspiring and challenging contest for individuals of all levels of fitness and activity. Employees were asked to self-select their division based on a total step goal for the three week period. Baby Steps was geared towards individuals looking for motivation to get off the couch and start moving. Over 21 days, Baby Steppers aimed to walk 175,000 total steps, approximately 8,300 steps per day. The majority of participants entered the competition as Pacemakers. Their goal was to walk 250,000 steps, approximately 11,905 steps per day. For our fitness buffs, we offered the Globetrotter division with the ultimate objective of reaching 500,000 total steps, approximately 23, 810 steps per day.

I confidently signed up to be a Globetrotter thinking it would be a breeze. Let me tell you, 500,000 is a lot of steps! I talked a lot of talk, but I was quickly surprised to learn just how much effort I would need to make in order to walk the walk. It is one thing to look at a number on paper, and it is an entirely different thing to be awake at 11:30pm on a Tuesday night just wishing I could relax on the couch and watch *The Hills* in peace, but instead finding myself marching in place to reach my step goal!

If nothing else, I found my large step goal to be a challenge and a healthy ego check. However, striving for such extreme numbers is not necessary in order to achieve good health. 10,000 steps a day is commonly considered to be a sound measure of a healthy active lifestyle. With approximately 2,000 steps in a mile, 10,000 steps is equivalent to walking five miles. The pedometer is an excellent measure for Rockefeller Walks because it provides

debate rages on: medical cost containment is in the hands of individuals. It is time to get serious about health, for our own sakes. The only certain way to reduce health care costs for ourselves and for our employer is to get moving and embrace the preventative wellness programs that are already available to us. In addition to Rockefeller Walks, Rockefeller University offers campus-wide health screenings through Occupational Health Services (OHS) including Blood Pressure Screening, Cholesterol Screening, Diabetes Screening, Mammography Screening, Skin Cancer Screening, and Prostate Screening. OHS also provides free flu shots among other immunizations. The easiest steps we can take to improve our health as an employee population are preventative ones.

With another year of Rockefeller Walks come and gone, hopefully we will take some of our new conscientiousness back into our "real lives." As a community, we do not have to move the proverbial mountain to change our health forecast; small efforts really count. Whether it is taking the stairs at work, getting off the subway one stop early and walking the rest of the way, or just not ignoring the next email reminder about a preventative screening on campus, we all have the power to improve our collective health.

In all honesty, after my pedometer is turned in and put away for next year's competition, I will probably not march in place while watching the train wreck that is Heidi and Spencer. However, the next time I come home after a long day, eager for my date with my DVR, I might just take the stairs.

Walk on. ☉



Some of Rockefeller Walks top ranking walkers (clockwise from bottom): George Smith of 825 Entertainment; Roselaine Gavidia, Elsie Rivera, Teresa Vargas-Hastings and Kathy Burke of The Women (Yolanda Hornedo-Brooke not pictured); and Aaron Torres of Up and Running. Congratulations to all participants! Photograph by Courtney McBride

instant feedback. The pedometer proves to us that each step does count and it often encourages us to strive to reach our step goal, particularly on more sedentary days. Rockefeller Walks has been an extremely valuable wellness initiative because it proves to us that our health is in our hands.

Wherever individuals find themselves on the political spectrum, one factor is becoming increasingly clear as the health reform

In Celebration of Father's Day, A Daughter Shares Her Thoughts

CARLY GELFOND

About a year ago, my father and I began calling each other during the last few minutes of our separate morning commutes. This wasn't something we actually agreed on. At first, our morning talks were merely for the purpose of addressing this or that practical matter—a phone bill, the expected arrival time at a family get-together—and then, it became something we both took a liking to.

A few days a week, we catch up as I'm hurrying along from the subway at 63rd Street and Lexington Avenue to The Rockefeller University campus on 66th Street and York Avenue, and he is driving along Princess Road to the Lawrenceville offices of The Special Olympics New Jersey, where he is Director of Operations.

"Hello, this is Rich!" I hear him say. Cool and collected are not two words one would use to describe my father, but somewhere in him is at least the potential for calm. For instance, when he's clipping coupons at the kitchen table. For instance, when he's reduced to two legs on a mat sticking out from underneath the riding lawn mower in the garage, carefully adjusting this or that part. I have seen him vacuum the driveway in a state of what could pass for tranquility, no matter that the act in itself is more or less the mark of excessive, some might say neurotic, attention to detail. But mostly, he is just his normal, high-strung self.

"It's me," I say into the phone, feeling as if I sound like I've just come out from under anesthesia by comparison.

"Good morning," he says. Like a runner stretches before the race, and a singer tries a few bars before the show, I consider this to be my warm-up for the day's conversations.

Most days, we comment on the weather. My father is really into weather. Lots of conversations between other people that involve weather take place because the participating parties find it easier to talk about than subjects that involve more effort, but my father actually seems to take pleasure in noting (out loud) the temperature climb a degree or two on the electronic thermometer inside his car as he descends from our house atop a little mountain down to the town below.

"I hope you wore your rain boots!" he might tell me. "Rain's supposed to hit us around 6, but Manhattan will get it around

5:30 p.m. or so, right on your way home from work."

Part of what's nice about our morning calls is that it keeps us in the loop on each other's daily affairs. Even though my father and stepmother live in New Jersey, not far from New York City, it's a tedious journey for me to get out to see them without the use of a car, and my father fears the city the way an ant on a sidewalk runs from human feet. They rarely venture in to visit.

In September, I made the mistake of relaying the progress of yet another dispiriting apartment search, having developed a chronic dissatisfaction with every place I have ever lived. I should have known better than to make him worry about my grim housing prospects, which pretty much cured him of any growing desire he had to come sample my big city life.

"I saw a place this weekend," I reported.

"And?" he inquired.

"Kind of a weird neighborhood," I told him. "Some people are destined to live in the financial district or the diamond district, but it looks like I might be destined to live in the artificial limb district," I sighed. I had a sense of humor about this. He didn't.

Often, we discuss goings-on at work. One day, I struggled to focus on a story he was telling about a new color copier he'd ordered for the office; another day found him describing something about a flagpole part needing to be replaced. You thought flagpoles were simple—flag and pole, maybe some ropes or something secured with a pulley—but listening to my father describe his complicated flagpole conundrums (something stuck, something tangled, some sort of flagpole-fixing professional called to the scene) you would realize how mistaken you'd been.

The year after graduating from college, I had been working in the Development Office at Rockefeller for only a matter of months when I picked up the phone at my desk and heard my father's voice on the other end of the line. This was before we had begun to have our morning phone chats, so I was somewhat surprised to hear from him.

"Just wanted to fill you in," he said when I answered. "I had a bit of a rough night."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I'm at the hospital," he explained. "But I'm fine," he added, quickly. He sounded

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way too calm, almost as if he were forcing it for my benefit. It sounds cliché and unsurprising to say that my eyes filled with tears just then, but the truth is that they did, so fast I didn't see them coming, and at the time I was surprised by it. I was alarmed by the wave of panic that swept over me the instant I heard his beaten down voice.

This is not the way these things are supposed to happen. Had we been playing by the rules, it would have been him, the parent, who got the call at work that something had happened to me, his child. Not the other way around.

The story I heard was this one: In the middle of the night, my father had suffered a massive seizure—a first in his life. As he flailed about, tangled among bed sheets in the dark room, he had broken both of his shoulders. My stepmother had dialed 911 and the next morning he was speaking to me, woozy and broken, from a hospital bed at Morristown Memorial Hospital, telling me he was "fine."

"Should I come?" I asked.

"It's up to you," he said, "but really, I'm okay."

The short version of what happened afterwards is that I decided not to go. Then I decided to go, then not to, then went. By a stroke of luck, my car was in the city and I took off for New Jersey as quickly as I could gather myself together.

That luck didn't last. I had only been on the bridge for a minute or two when I felt the thud, that heavy noise that car bumpers

make when they collide. You feel it in your chest. The man inside the truck in front of me emerged from the driver's side door, pointing and yelling. Many times I have observed scenes like this one from afar. Man 1 stands screaming at man 2, who screams back louder and with increasingly flamboyant gesturing. This was not something I could handle. All I could handle, I realized, was getting my father on the phone so that he could tell me what to do.

But this was not an option.

"Get out of the car and see if there's damage," his voice said in my head. I got out of the car. Ignoring the man, I assessed the damage, of which there appeared to be none. "There's no damage?" the father in my head said. "Are you sure? Check again." I checked again.

"There's no damage," I pointed out to the man, who was Hispanic and looked to be in his mid-sixties. He shook his head and spoke to me in broken English: "Not paying attention. Maybe damage inside, can't see,"

he said. I needed to talk my way out of this.

"Sir, I'm so sorry, but there doesn't look like there's any damage—please, let's just forget it. I'm in the middle of a family emergency." The man looked down and shook his head again, mumbling angrily in Spanish, but then he walked back to the door of his truck, waving a dismissive hand back at me before slamming the door.

"Boy, are you lucky," said my father in my head.

My father was laid up in the hospital for over a week while he waited for his double shoulder replacement surgery. He was drugged on painkillers and frequently incomprehensible. He was depressed. When he wasn't asleep, we fed him his meals, of which he ate very little and of which I ate a fair amount. (For the record, hospital food really gets a bad rap in cartoons.) We took him for walks up and down the hall. My stepmother accompanied him to the bathroom. The nurses took him to shower. He smelled anyway.

Most of us assume that a day will probably come when we'll hold a fork full of food up to the puckered lips of our aged mothers and fathers. But we also assume that when this day comes, we will have long ago released them from our needy clutches. Faced with a flat tire, a broken heart, a root canal, we will hope that we will have already internalized their voices in our head when their real voices can't be reached for comment.

That day on the bridge, as I sat back, clammy with sweat, in the seat of my car and the man in the truck ahead of me drove on, I realized I was still hovering at the edge of my father's driveway. I wasn't yet past the mailbox.

When we speak now on our morning phone calls, I appreciate the ordinariness of our conversation. I'd be lying if I said I make lasting mental notes of the guidance he gives me on all matters of daily tasks, but I like to think I am retaining more than I realize. Someday, if the need arises, I'll be able to fix a flagpole. ◊

June 2010 at Last

MELINA HERMAN

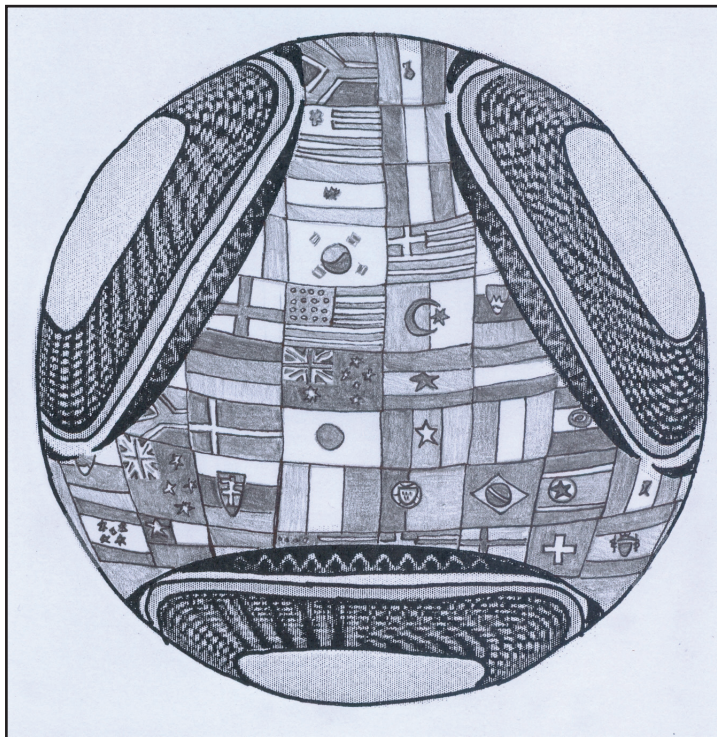
Anticipated eagerly by millions worldwide, June has arrived. June! The month when all expectations are to be met, all questions answered, all wishes fulfilled. 64 times 90 minutes of excitement, joy, and cheers, spanned over a month, are just about to start. Ah, the exhilaration! The energy! And the competition: every four years, now for 80 years, all play to become the one nation reigning over the six FIFA continental zones.

Starting June 11, 2010, the world will witness what it has been longing for these past four years: the strategy, the technique, the stamina, the rivalry. Will Messi live up to his potential and help bring back the title Argentina hasn't held in 24 years? Will Italy repeat 1934 and 1938's double-win? Will England's performance prove it deserves its place among the competition's favorites? Will Brazil break its own record? Will Spain become European and world champions? Are we in for a surprise-win?

Sadly, it won't be all bliss. Disenchantment looms. After the game, many will be left to doubt and wonder: questioning the coach's choices, reflecting on the referee's decisions, pondering yet again the possi-

bilities offered by video-assisted refereeing. Yet, whatever the result of the match, it is always fun, and critical to the game-watching experience, to enjoy and analyze the play with friends. There is no better way to exult and release the tensions of the game—read, frustrations—than by commenting it with your fellow supporters (chauvinism encouraged). And for those getting tired of the actual sporting event, there will be sponsors, ads, and charities, from the

ubiquitous and standard Coca Cola to One Goal¹. Let's not forget the official song and various items to be purchased, with the most important being to proudly wear and defend your country's colors—and loathe



Cartoon by Rossana Henriques

your opponent's.

June is here. It's time for labs to empty every afternoon. Bring on the World Cup! ◊

Reference:

1. <http://www.join1goal.org/>

SUPPORT LOCAL, ACT GLOBAL

JEANNE GARBARINO

As the golden rays of sunlight caress my face and the warm, heavy air embraces me like an old friend, I realize that summer is upon us. Hearing the word “summer” immediately conjures up thoughts of ripe, juicy fruit and crispy vegetables eaten just hours after being offered to us by the earth. In my attempts to perform every action with intention, even the necessary act of eating, I am reminded of how the local farmers, with countless hours of hard work and an innate connection to nature, have allowed me to bring that delicious strawberry to my lips. As someone who has been involved in local Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA) projects for many years, I am spoiled. Never before becoming involved had I tasted a strawberry, even though I have consumed imposters purchased from the supermarket. Now, I can’t even bring myself to enter the produce section of my “local” mega-chain grocery store, at least without being extraordinarily disappointed.

It all started about seven years ago when I attended a meeting at my local community center hosted by Farmer Katy of Hawthorne Valley Farm. Katy, along with her team, discussed what was to be expected from their upcoming garden season along with how we, the community, could participate. And by participate, I really mean enjoy the fruits of their labor—literally. She explained how her farm operated and how the members of the CSA contribute to their ability to sustain proper farming practices. All I had to do to enjoy organic and biodynamically grown fruits and vegetables delivered almost to my doorstep once a week from June through November was pay a fee up front (approximately \$550 for a fruit and vegetable share) and volunteer five measly hours of my time. This idea was fantastic. As someone who abhors the business practices of mega-companies such as Wal-Mart and McDonalds, I am always looking to support mom-and-pop operations. I was thrilled and, thus, a beautiful relationship was born.

During my first year as a CSA member, I was minimally involved. I just made sure that I was home by 6:30 p.m. on Thursdays so that I could grab my weekly share. Usually, this involved picking up my baskets from my apartment and walking to the delivery site (1 block), which was lined with green milk crate-looking baskets full of produce. Each basket had a sign—“1lb Carrots Per Share” or “2 heads of Lettuce Per Share.” It was clear that the acquisition of your CSA share was based on the honor system, a concept totally foreign to me. But, I really liked it. Later, people in my neighborhood who shared similar values about food and life in general encouraged me to become more involved. In addition to securing a highly coveted spot on the CSA member list, I learned about the existence of a winter share—a monthly delivery consisting of mainly root vegetables, apples and pears, and hearty lettuces—and eventu-

ally landed a spot as a volunteer coordinator. Working at this post made me fully aware of how the health and well being of a CSA was completely contingent upon its members; it was so much more than writing a check and re-filling baskets.

Now that I have recently moved, I no longer have the ability to be involved in my old CSA and the waiting list for my new neighborhood’s CSA is about a mile long. Why is it important to me that I am involved in such an organization? Aside from being able to use organically grown ingredients to feed my family, being a part of a CSA helps to keep up the momentum for our local agricultural industry. What does this mean to consumers and society in general? The first thing that comes to my mind is a reduction in carbon emissions. If you are eating locally grown food, as opposed to food transported from Mexico, Chile, or China, you are less dependent on food transportation and the associated gasoline usage. For me,

this is the most important reason to join a CSA. Some other important reasons to participate in a CSA (or, at the very least, make regular visits to the farmers market) are:

1. You avoid eating foods that, due to the significantly increased time it takes to get from dirt to plate, have lost a large percentage of their nutritional value.
2. You become exposed to “new” fruits and vegetables as well as new ways of cooking.
3. You have the chance to visit the farm, form a relationship with the people growing your food, and learn about local farming practices.
4. You have the opportunity to purchase items other than produce. For instance, antibiotic- and hormone-free pasture-raised meats, dairy products, free-range eggs, and local honey can be ordered as can organically grown flow-



Cherry tomatoes. Photograph provided by the author.

ers. Now that I have sung the praises of a CSA, I think that it is only fair to inform you of the potentially negative aspects surrounding the business model, especially the idea of shared risk. One cannot possibly predict natural catastrophes such as floods or, as was the case for tomatoes in 2009, a fungal blight. If something happens that compromises your ability to receive your share (from the farmers’ end), you cannot get a refund. Additionally, some crops can do much better than others, so it is possible that you get a disproportionately high amount of, say, beets and very few cucumbers. In spite of this, I still strongly believe that the benefits outweigh the risks and, therefore, I will always buy local (which is almost always equivalent with being the most fresh) and support my CSA whenever possible. I urge you to do the same.

For more information check out Hawthorne Valley Farm (<http://www.hawthornevalleyfarm.org/>), Just Food (<http://www.justfood.org/>), and Grow NYC (<http://www.grownyc.org/green-market>). •



This Month Natural Selections interviews **Andrea Quijano**, the Electronic Resources Librarian.
Country of origin: United States

New York State of Mind

1. How long have you been living in New York? Not including the years I spent in CA and abroad, I've lived in NY for over 30 years.

2. Where do you live? Cobble Hill, Brooklyn. According to New York Magazine's recent ranking of NYC neighborhoods, the happiest people live in Cobble Hill. I agree.

3. Which is your favorite neighborhood? The West Village. Walking through the streets of this neighborhood allows me to transport myself back to a time when cars, cell phones, and computers did not exist.

4. What do you think is the most overrated thing in the city? And underrated? The nightlife in Williamsburg, Brooklyn is a bit overrated. There's only so many wannabe hipsters that one can endure in an evening, and the bars and restaurants pale in comparison to what Manhattan has to offer. The most underrated thing about NY is Seba Seba. It's a small Colombian coffee shop in Jackson Heights, Queens that sells the best empanadas, chicharrón, and buñuelos in all of NY.

5. What do you miss most when you are out of town? Aside from my partner and family, I miss the Manhattan skyline the most. I still get goose bumps whenever I see it.

6. If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be? Absolutely nothing.

7. Describe a perfect weekend in NYC. Cycling or riding my Vespa in warm, sunny, breezy weather in zero traffic.

8. What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC? The day I met the love of my life on a blind date in Soho.

9. If you could live anywhere else, where would that be? London, because I have lots of friends who live there and it's one of the few cities in the world that has a similar energy like NY.

10. Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker? Why? Definitely. Born and raised, baby! ☺



THE TOP SCIENCE/SCIENCE FICTION MOVIES

BERNIE LANGS

In compiling a list of the best Science/Science Fiction films, I've avoided blockbuster franchises such as *Star Wars*, *Planet of the Apes*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *Star Trek*, though several movies in each of these series are top notch. Many of the movies on my list I haven't seen in years, but they each have left an enduring impression on me and shaped how I feel about the importance of film in general.

1. Contact: Jody Foster leads a cast that includes fine performances by Matthew McConaughey, James Woods, and Tom Skerritt about the Earth's first communication from an extraterrestrial source. The 1997 film also explores the relationship of science and religion in a more meaningful way than most movies of the Sci Fi genre. This is not only my favorite science film, it is one of my favorite movies, mostly because the scene where Jody Foster finally encounters the alien life is truly emotional and deeply moving.

2. 2001: A Space Odyssey: absolutely the Mother of All Science Fiction movies, the 1968 Stanley Kubrick film written by Kubrick and Sci Fi maven Arthur C. Clarke is a must-see. Endlessly discussed and debated, one gets out of this movie basically anything one wants to: answers to philosophical questions on human nature, a warning on the power of machines, or even the ultimate reason for man's place in the Universe. A trippy, Sixties movie indeed.

3. War of the Worlds (2005): the early 1950s version was fun, but I can't get enough of this Steven Spielberg film starring Tom Cruise and Dakota Fanning. It's as much a great story of the awakening of parental love and responsibility as it is a tour de force of special and terrifying effects. Tom Cruise shows a depth of act-

ing ability playing the protective father facing impossible odds to save his children from invaders from another planet. Dakota Fanning was criticized for screaming too much, but I feel her hysterics blend in perfectly with the non-stop action. The scene where the aliens burst onto the screen and the subsequent mayhem is reason enough to watch this movie again and again.

4. The Day the Earth Caught Fire and The Day the Earth Stood Still: made in Britain, *Fire* was released in 1961 and is a chilling Cold War lesson in the imagined consequences of the nuclear arms race. The earth's orbit has shifted because of atomic tests and the action is seen through investigative newspaper reporters tracking down what is going on. The last shots of this movie are probably amongst cinema's most chilling. As the world awaits the results of corrective blasts to set the planet back on track, the newspaper is to decide which headlines will run: "World Doomed" or "World Saved." *Stood Still* (recently remade) is a 1951 movie that's a bit campy, but good fun as well and surprisingly intelligent. The visitor from outer space with his steely and cold robot, respectively and famously named Gort and Klaatu, are now iconic images in popular culture. A scene where the visitor solves a professor's difficult mathematical problem is worth the viewing of the film alone. I've always considered these two movies together for some reason, probably because they share a similar moral outlook and lesson.

5. Colossus, The Forbin Project: a 1970 film in which a super computer becomes intelligent and subsequently takes over the world. I haven't seen this film in over 35 years, but it was without a doubt light years ahead of its time in predicting the dangers of machines and the possibility that they could go out of control. ☺

PDA NEWS

ISABEL KURTH

Yes, we know.

It's sometimes not so clear who we are and what we are doing. If you are one of those who wonder, this is now the place to read about it. In this new section in *Natural Selections*, we will bring you a monthly update about our meetings, current initiatives, and the newest issues affecting postdocs on campus.

But before going into the news, let me first briefly tell you something about this organization. The PDA originally started as a social networking group. Yes, believe it or not, old times were party times! A group of postdocs realized that there was no place to get together and interact, so they organized the first RU-wide party in 2001. The party was a success and the beginning of a series of social events open to all postdocs and students, including the summer BBQ's.

Shortly thereafter, the PDA realized that their organization could make a bigger impact on post-doc's lives than just through parties. The members founded the RU Post Doctoral Association with the main goals to :

(i) provide both social and career development resources and

(ii) represent the interests of the postdoctoral community directly to the faculty and administration.

In the beginning, the PDA did not have a budget and depended on the goodwill of the Dean's office to fund their projects. In 2001, the PDA submitted their first budget proposal of \$14 000. The budget was approved, and permitted the PDA to become a university organization. Over time, the budget slowly increased to \$90,000 for the 2008 fiscal year, along with the addition of a two-day PDA retreat. Recently, the PDA has seen tougher times. As everything else on campus, our budget has been drastically cut to 70% for the 2010 fiscal year, resulting in a current budget of \$64,400. There are currently 4 postdocs running this ship: Ruchi Gupta, Aakanksha Singhvi, Alok Shah, and Isabel Kurth.

We now have a whole set of initiatives that have been turned into reality and would not exist without the PDA. Each spring we organize and sponsor a poster competition during the annual recruitment days. This year, the PDA pre-selected seven posters, which were then ranked by a faculty committee. The top five winners received cash awards and gift cards. We also give out travel awards, preferentially to postdocs who have been at RU for at least three years and have never been to a meeting. This year, we partially funded five post-docs to present at both national and international conferences. It also has become a tradition to send one to two representatives to attend the National Postdoctoral Association annual meeting to learn about postdoctoral initiatives at other institutions. Unfortunately, this year we had to skip that due to budget cuts. Every two years, we help to organize the Tri-Institutional Career Symposium, together with Cornell University and Sloan Kettering. The PDA also co-sponsors, with the Dean's office, the RU Biotech Forum and *Natural Selections*. By far the biggest event that we organize is the annual PDAretreat. This event has grown from attendees at a one-day event in 2006, into an overnight stay with seminars, poster sessions, discus-

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sion groups, a keynote lecture, a nightly dance party, and over 80 participants.

During the last year we launched a series of new initiatives. We run a monthly postdoc seminar series in an informal context that is open to the whole RU community. Due to budget cuts, the PDA has actively solicited and obtained corporate funding from different companies and the corporate partners have offered gift vouchers for each month's speaker. (We encourage anybody who is interested to present at these seminars to contact us.) We have also recruited a career counselor, Robert Tillman from Columbia University, who can be contacted for advice on CVs and runs mock interviews. In concert with HR and IT, we have developed and launched a postdoc alumni network database and website. This was set up to facilitate networking and scientific exchange even after leaving RU (<http://postdocalumni.rockefeller.edu>). And, we have also organized a number of sponsored events. Last year we hosted a *Nature Networks* event at the Faculty and Student's club with a discussion on the future of publishing. There are plans for similar events later this year.

And then—of course—the parties. Yes, we still party in modern times! Traditionally, we host two BBQs a year with free food and music at Faculty Club. The BBQs are open to the whole RU community and we usually have a great turnout with up to 250 people. In February we sponsor beer and pizza for the Superbowl, and we do the same during the annual pool tournament in December. We also partly sponsor the student Halloween party. And did you know that you can apply for a \$150 sponsorship if you plan a summer BBQ where at least two labs are involved? We sponsored this for twelve labs last year.

On a daily basis, the PDA takes an active role in mediating when people run into a variety of issues including housing and childcare. In the past, the PDA has been influential in negotiating with the Child Family Center and housing offices and has been able to achieve many favorable outcomes, including grandfathering in existing tenants during the big rent increase of 2006, the introduction of a transparent housing waiting list, and the release of the 2-year rent lock for individuals needing

to move due to personal or financial hardship. We also meet with the Dean's office and HR twice a year to discuss current concerns, with additional meetings with HR and housing when needed. Last year, this totaled six meetings over the calendar year. We also have an annual meeting with Paul Nurse. As far as has been feasible, meeting updates have found their way into the *Natural Selections* pages or postdoc inboxes.

The recent budget cuts have affected several of our events, most significantly the retreat last year, which we had to keep at the lowest possible cost. We also had to cancel our fall BBQ and we replaced the summer one with last month's cheese &

wine party. We were lucky to hit a warm May day and had a good turnout of people who enjoyed the food, the drinks and the jazzy sounds of "The Moth to Flame". We plan to have a regular fall BBQ beginning in September.

Currently, we are organizing the PDA retreat. This year the retreat will be in early August (watch out for the dates!) and we are happy to announce that we will have two Nobel Prize winners joining us—Sir Paul Nurse, and Richard Axel who will serve as our key note speaker. For updates on the retreat and upcoming events, check out our next article in the July/August issue. ☺

A Haitian Perspective on the Earthquake: An Interview with Mardoche Dorval, A Haitian Living in NY

SHAUNA O'GARRO

Approximately one month after the earthquake, my friend Mardoche Dorval, a Haitian who has lived in Paris, Miami, and New York for the last few years, traveled back to Haiti to investigate, assess the damage, and see what he could do to help. When he returned, I sat down with him to get his thoughts on the situation in his homeland.

On reaching Port au Prince: It's usually about a five hour flight to get to Haiti, but because only essential flights for the NGOs were allowed in, I had to fly to the Dominican Republic and then catch a bus to Port au Prince the next morning. The bus takes about seven hours to reach the city. There's usually only one bus to Haiti every morning, but so many people had flown in to help that I was on bus number eight. There were many, many Haitians who had returned home to help, boarding the buses. Several hadn't been home for many years, but there were also people from all over the world who had decided to come and help.

On the visiting before and after the quake: The last time I visited Port au Prince was May 2009. The biggest difference this time, of course, is that 80% of Port au Prince is destroyed. There is total devastation. I stayed at my aunt's house in Croix des Bouquets, which is on the outskirts of the city. Luckily her boyfriend is an engineer, so their house is well built and didn't sustain much damage.

What he did while he was there: While I was there, I toured the city, surveying the damage to the capital. There were people still digging through the rubble and although it was a month later, I did see a body pulled from the debris. I helped by translating for the volunteers and NGO workers. I also gave out food and water as I traveled through different neighborhoods.

What surprised him the most: What surprised me the most is that people were already getting back to life as usual. Vendors were back in business, opening their stands and the shops that weren't destroyed. The people were functioning, even if the government wasn't. I don't know about the rest of the affected areas, but the majority of vendors in Port au Prince are women. I came upon one older woman sitting at her stand and counting her money. I asked her, "What were you doing when the earthquake

hit?" She replied, "The same thing I'm doing now, counting my money!" and laughed. The Haitian people, and especially Haitian women, are very resilient.

On why the earthquake had such a high death toll: Port au Prince was severely overcrowded, with a population of 2.5 million people. On top of that, there was no building code. This is the main reason why so many people died. I'm sure that once the tallying is done, the final death toll will be much higher than estimated.

On the loss of the educated class: People of all classes died, but Haiti lost a huge percentage of its intellectual capital in the earthquake. The quake hit at 4:53 p.m., when most people were still at work. The educated class (government officials, bankers, office workers, etc.) were the people most likely to be inside the larger buildings in the city. On top of all of the death and destruction, there is now a huge chunk of the middle class missing from the workforce. I think many Haitians will return because of this. One of my friends already got a job in the financial industry there and has moved back.

His thoughts on the future: I think that if the United Nations, World Bank, and Haitian government work together, using a system of check and balances to curtail corruption, Haiti will emerge a different place. Even before the quake Bill Clinton had been spearheading an initiative to bring business into the country. If these businesses and others continue their investments, Haiti can be a wonderful place in the future.

Haiti had asked for \$3.8 billion to help rebuild the infrastructure of the city, but they received \$9.9 billion to be disbursed over the next three years. Several countries who understood the tragedy that Haiti had to endure have contributed to this fund and, with it, a whole new path has opened up for Haiti.

Shortly after I sat down with Mardoche, he announced his decision to return to Haiti to help with the rebuilding of his country. He is currently in Miami, meeting with other Haitians to discuss the best ways to not only rebuild, but improve, Haiti. By the time this article has been published, he will be back in his homeland, one of many people hoping that Haiti's suffering has finally ended and helping to ensure its bright future. ☺

My Neighborhood: Jackson Heights

AILEEN MARSHALL

I have lived in Jackson Heights for slightly over twenty years. Jackson Heights is considered to be the area between Roosevelt Avenue to the south and Astoria Boulevard to the north, between the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway to the west and Junction Boulevard to the east. Jackson Heights is known for being the home to some of the first garden apartments in the country. Many of the apartment buildings are built around a central green space blocked from the street by the buildings. Most of these buildings are also some of the oldest cooperative apartments in the country. Several blocks along 34th Avenue are considered a historic district.

When I first moved to Jackson Heights, in the late 1980s, the neighborhood mostly consisted of Columbian immigrants, with other South American groups making up the balance. There is also an enclave of an Indian population centered on 74th Street near Roosevelt Avenue. Unfortunately, at the time, Roosevelt Avenue was allegedly dominated by the Columbian drug cartels. Over the years, the neighborhood has become more racially diverse. In the last few

years, there has been an influx of people who could no longer afford the rents or the home prices in Manhattan. Landlords, seeing the opportunity, renovated homes and apartment buildings. A number of new retail stores have moved into the area as well, like Dunkin Donuts, Subway and the ubiquitous drug stores: Duane Reade and Rite Aid. Of course, there are still many good South American restaurants. The crime rate has dropped in recent years, and it's a much safer neighborhood now.

There is no shortage of grocery stores and interesting restaurants in the neighborhood. While I don't mind the convenience of picking up my weekly groceries at the local Waldbaums, I sometimes like to go to the Trade Fair, where there is a great array of every different kind of ethnic food you can imagine. As for dining, the Columbian restaurant Pio Pio (Spanish for the sound a chick makes) is well known. However, the neighborhood is full of many different small and casual restaurants. Mamas's Empanana's, Pollos a la Brasa Mario, and Seba Seba are a few I can recommend. As long as I've lived in the neighborhood,

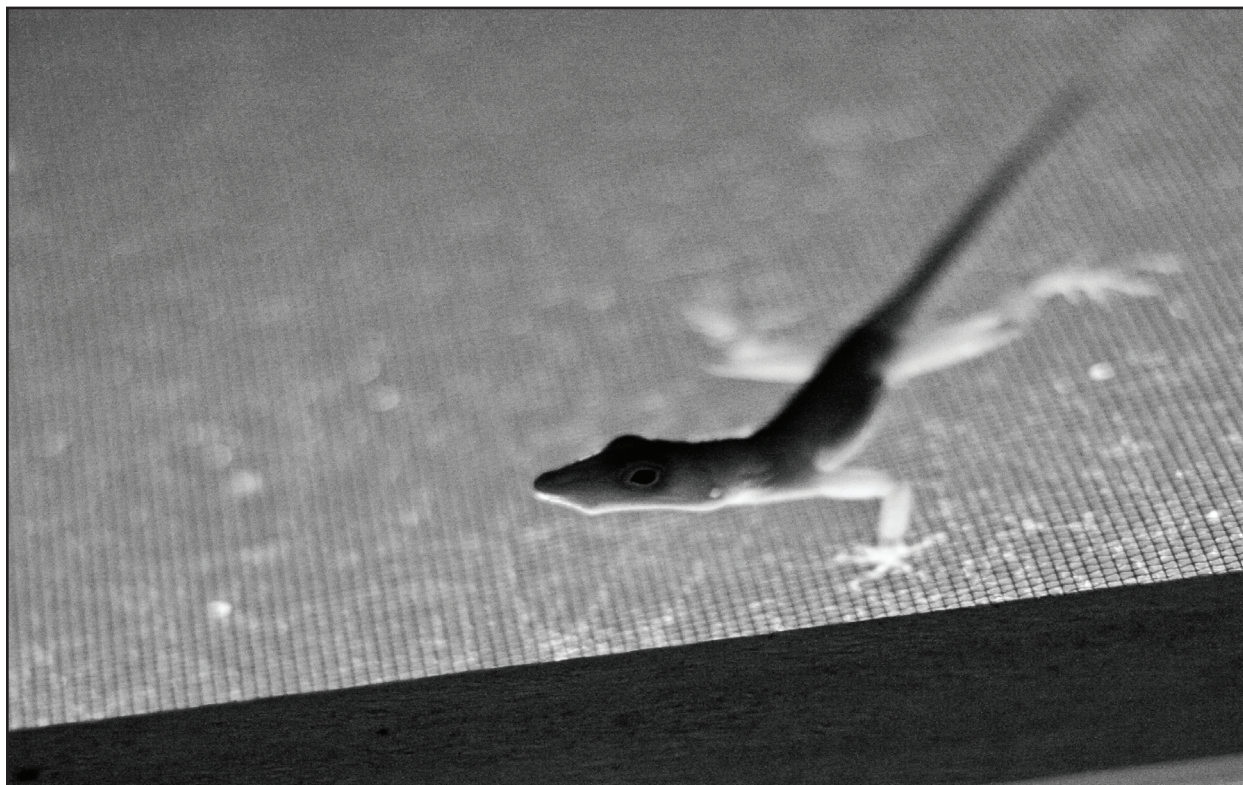
I would not have time to have tried every restaurant.

Travers Park, on 34th Avenue and 77th Street is the most active area in the neighborhood. In the summer, small concerts are held there and there's a farmers market on Sundays. There is a public library on 83rd Street, which is also very active. Unfortunately, with budget cuts, they are now closed on Sundays. However, I've noticed that the beauty parlors in the area don't follow the traditional schedule of being closed on Sunday and Monday. Many are open Sunday, and do mostly walk-in business.

If you wish to visit Jackson Heights it can be reached by going to the 74th Street/Broadway/Roosevelt Avenue stop on the E, F, G, R, or V subway lines. One can also take the 7 train to either 74th Street or 82nd Street. The Q32 bus also comes from Manhattan.

This is part of a series highlighting the different residential neighborhoods in and around the city. If you have grown to love your New York neighborhood, whether you're a native New Yorker or a new arrival, please write and tell us about it. ☺

Life on a Roll



Espionage by Adria Le Boeuf

