

Chel^{now}sea

THE PRIDE ISSUE



Potomac Theater Company, p. 22

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 40

THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF CHELSEA

JUNE 22 - 28, 2007

Bards are ousted at the Hotel Chelsea

BY LAWRENCE LERNER

On Sunday, Stanley Bard celebrated his 73rd birthday.

The following day, he received a present that must have seemed like a cruel hoax: He was ousted as manager of the Hotel Chelsea, the legendary enclave that has sheltered and inspired countless artistic and creative types during Bard's 50-year tenure.

The move came courtesy of the two other members who sit on the Hotel Chelsea's board along with Bard and his children, David and Michelle. They, like Bard, are the heirs of the hotel's original partners.

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Dog owners form unified pack on West Side dog run

BY TABITHA EARP

The Chelsea Dog Park Coalition, a newly formed group pressing for changes at the Chelsea Waterside Park dog run, took its case to Community Board 4 last Thursday night at a meeting held by the Waterfront and Parks committee.

Although the dog owners focused on the same issues they presented to Noreen Doyle, vice president of the Hudson River Park Trust, at the annual meeting of the Chelsea Waterside Park Association back in May, they are now a well-organized

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Remembering Bayard Rustin with Pride

Bayard Rustin, a giant of the civil rights movement and former Chelsea resident who late in life embraced gay activism, in London's Trafalgar Square in 1983. For more on Rustin's life, see Page 14; Chelsea Now's Gay Pride coverage continues on page 7.

GAY POLITICS

New York State Assembly approves gay marriage law

BY PAUL SCHINDLER

In a historic vote late in the evening on Tuesday, the New York State Assembly approved legislation guaranteeing marriage equality for gay and lesbian couples.

The measure was approved by a vote of 85 to 61 after a floor debate that lasted more than three hours. Four Republicans joined 81 Democrats in supporting the bill. The nays included 38 Republicans and 23 Democrats.

The marriage equality legislation was introduced by Democratic Governor Eliot Spitzer on April 27, and sponsored in the Assembly by Daniel O'Donnell, an Upper West Side Democrat. O'Donnell and his partner John Banta were among the plaintiffs denied marriage rights in a ruling last July by New York's highest court.

"It is extraordinarily important to have actual, real live gay people in the legislative body who can speak to the issue," O'Donnell told Chelsea Now hours before the vote. "It gets past the esoteric arguments about equality, which are important, but they are not the same thing as saying, 'I want this.' It's not the same as, 'This is important to me.' On the floor today, I'm going to talk about John and how we've been together for 26 years and about my fear of going out one day and getting hit by a bus and not having taken care of my partner."

In moving comments on the Assembly floor at around 8:30 in the evening, O'Donnell spoke of the devastation he felt at age 12 losing his mother to cancer, the person who he thought would teach him how to love. But, he said, "Love found me in the body of a man" his first day of college at the Catholic University of America.


"I could not have survived my late teens and my 20s if I did not have John Banta in my life," O'Donnell said in the concluding moments of the floor debate. "What I learned from him was that I should love myself. No one believed in me, no one taught me what he has taught me."

Approval of the measure in the Assembly, even with its overwhelming Democratic majority, marks a dramatic turnaround for the cause of marriage equality in New York, coming less than a

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Bards are ousted at the Hotel Chelsea

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On Monday, Bard and his children were busy moving boxes of belongings out into their van while concerned tenants gathered in the hotel's lobby, hugging the family and pondering their fate and the future of one of New York's most vibrant creative communities.

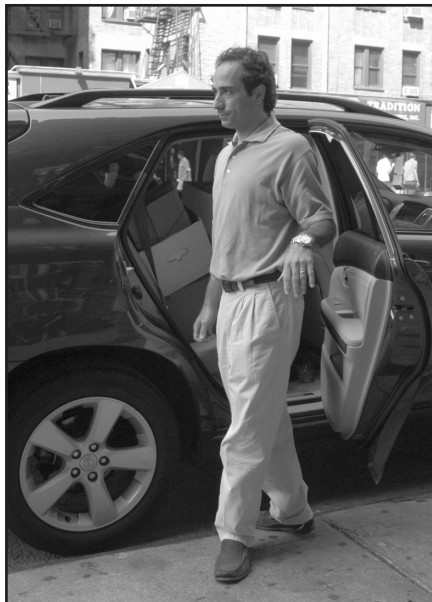
For his part, Bard took pains to assure them that everything would be all right. Among those concerned was Ed Hamilton, a writer who, along with his wife, Debbie Martin, pens the Living With Legends Hotel Chelsea blog.

Placing his hand on Hamilton's shoulder, Bard said, "I want you to be patient. I want all the tenants to keep calm, and we're going to try to make things work for everyone. Don't be nervous. There will be some transitional things with maybe me, but not the tenants. I'm going to make sure you guys are, you know, protected and safe."

That went only so far in easing tenants' minds, however.

Tim Sullivan, who has lived in the Chelsea since 1982, said many of the tenants saw the writing on the wall awhile ago, when they first spotted men in starched shirts with clipboards hanging around the lobby.

"We've been kind of waiting to see what's going to happen. When you have a building like this that everybody wants, wants to gain control of, it puts us long-term tenants who've lived here—artists, musicians, writers—on edge. What are they



Chelsea Now photo by Lawrence Lerner

David Bard, son of Hotel Chelsea owner and manager Stanley Bard, stands beside the family's van on Monday after they were ousted as managers of the famed hotel.

going to do?" he asked. "We thought they were going to try to get everybody out and turn it into condos, do what they did at the Gramercy [Hotel]."

On Thursday morning, Sullivan's suspicions were confirmed when tenants got a first look at the new management's priorities, in the form of a letter found in their mailboxes, asking them to "please make sure that you've paid all the outstanding

rent on your portfolio. Please disregard this letter if you've already done so."

That letter presumably came from the Hotel Chelsea's new management team from BD Hotels NY L.L.C., owner and operator of some 5,000 hotel rooms at several New York boutique hotels, including the Maritime Hotel, in Chelsea, and the Bowery and Chambers Hotels.

The other board members who instigated the changes at the Chelsea—Marlene Krauss, a doctor who is the chief executive of KBL Healthcare Ventures, a biotechnology venture capital firm, and David Elder, another heir of an original owner who lives in California—replaced Stanley Bard with the new team at a meeting last Thursday, though the change took effect on Monday. Two years ago, an arbitrator who was brought in to settle an ownership dispute between the board members ruled that while Bard and his family control 58 percent of the hotel's shares, Krauss and Elder constitute a majority when it comes to management decisions.

Last Thursday, Sullivan noticed something peculiar going on in the lobby, where he was sitting with his friend, fellow tenant David Litner.

"A big guy, a suit, came in with a briefcase, he shakes hands with Stanley, he shakes hands with David. Then he goes over to Larry Rivers' painting [on the lobby wall], and he looks at the painting, like he's seeing something in the painting," said Sullivan. "Then he goes into the office. Dave and I looked at each other and went, 'Uh-oh.' Your heart just drops."

The pair then heard an argument going

on inside Stanley Bard's office, which is adjacent to the lobby. "I heard yelling and screaming. He [Stanley] said, 'F**k no. I'm not giving it up.' Then somebody came in and gave David some kind of official papers to sign. I then saw them stagger out of the meeting," said Sullivan. "It was not pretty."

The 12-story, 250-room Chelsea Hotel was originally built in 1884 as Manhattan's first co-op apartment and was the tallest building in New York for two decades. It became a residential hotel in 1905, went bankrupt and was revived by Stanley's father, David Bard, and his associates in 1939.

Stanley Bard started working at the hotel in the 1950s, along with his father and two other ownership partners. Mr. Bard stayed on to take over operations of the Chelsea along with his children, while the heirs of the other partners stayed at arms length.

Stanley Bard has been the public face of the Hotel Chelsea for more than a half-century, often helping struggling artists who fell behind on their rent. In the process, he created one of the most famous icons and artist communities in the world.

On Monday, David Bard, 41, carried boxes to his van, parked just outside the hotel, and loaded them with a stoic look on his face. After giving him a hug, a tenant who was watching told him how much she appreciated him and his father, and all the little things they do, like fixing pipes.

"I'll miss fixing those pipes," the younger Bard said as a tear streamed down his left cheek.

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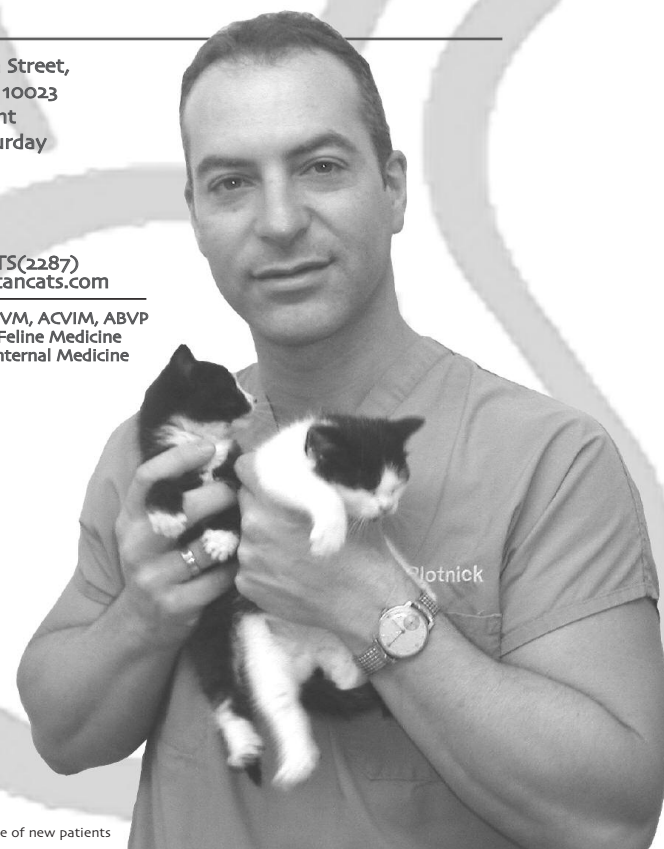


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