

Advance

Your Hometown Newspaper

THURSDAY - January 14, 1993

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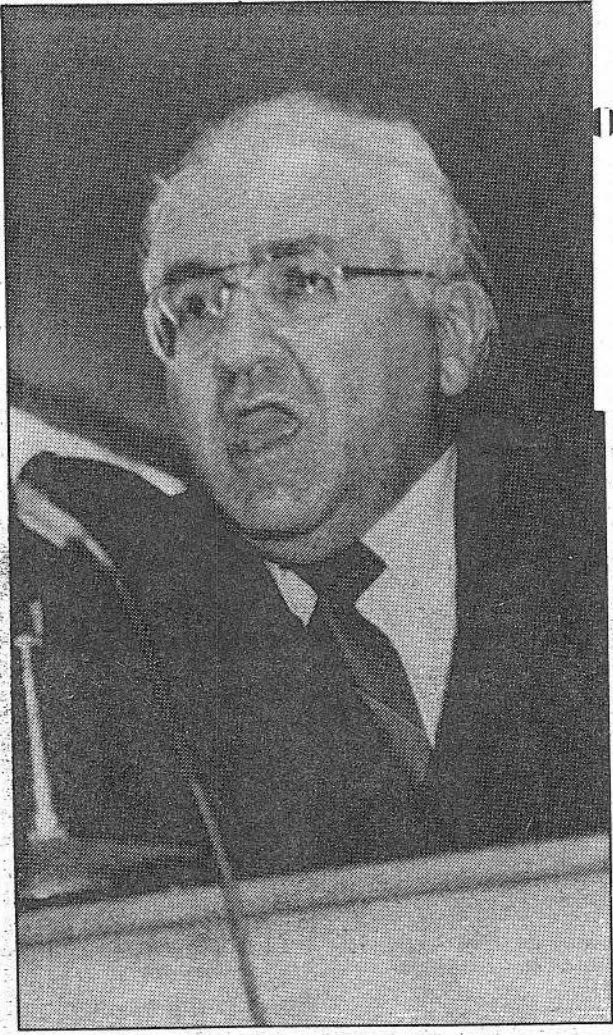
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You're the tops . . .

Pictured above are Bellport resident Deanna Annis (left) and Patchogue resident Victor J. Yannacone, Jr. (right), this year's Long Island Advance Man and Woman of the Year, selected in recognition of their many contributions to their communities. Stories, page 3

Oak-Rt. 112 light not top priority?

by Kevin Molloy

State officials do not consider the intersection of Oak Street and Route 112 in Patchogue a top priority intersection, which may have been the reason why a traffic light there remained out of service for four days during the New Year's weekend, Suffolk County Police officials informed

comment by press time, after a phone call was placed to their office Tuesday morning.

According to the police official, the DOT subcontracts work for most of their 2,000 traffic signals in Suffolk to outside companies, but a crew of 20 state workers are directly responsible for some traffic lights, including the one at Oak Street and Route 112.

However, a classification system

"Route 112 and Oak Street is in class three, which is the lowest priority," the police official said. "The police department has requested that that intersection be upgraded to class one."

Residents living in the area of the traffic light reported at the accident scene that the traffic light had been out of service as early as New Year's Eve on Thursday, December 31. The accident

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Man and woman of the year

Every year, the Long Island Advance asks our readers to nominate those members of the community whom they believe have played an important role in their community, and have demonstrated their commitment to the area through their actions, to be honored as the Long Island Advance Man and Woman of the Year. While all of those nominated this year were

deserving of the honor, the selection committee has chosen Victor Yannacone, Jr. of Patchogue and Deanna Annis of Bellport for the honor this year. We believe that their actions and involvements in the community will speak for themselves as to why they were our choices.



Victor Yannacone with a model of the dioxin molecule in Agent Orange

Victor J. Yannacone



Deanna Annis with movie producer Spike Lee at a recent AIDS benefit

Deanna Annis

Patchogue eatery granted outdoor music permit

by Kevin Molloy

A Patchogue riverfront restaurant will be allowed to feature non-amplified outdoor music this summer through the use of a special permit obtained at Monday night's village board meeting.

But while the permit limited the hours and volume at which the music could be played, and stipulated that the permit would be revoked upon the first conviction for such a violation, the compromise left neither the owner of the summer eatery nor residents in the area completely satisfied.

The 4-3 approval of the permit may also open the door for other restaur-

rants in the village to receive such permits.

The permit had been requested several months ago by Bayport resident Connie Schwadron, owner of Pier 66's Riverdeck restaurant on River Avenue, following a summer when a number of complaints had been filed about outdoor music being played there and for excessive noise summonses had been issued.

Schwadron acknowledged that in the past the music had gotten loud at times, but said she was seeking the permit for non-amplified instruments to be played under a tent at the outdoor restaurant to complement her business.

"I do not like loud music. I know on occasion in the past music has been much louder than I care for. I would prefer having no amplification," she said. "We would like the opportunity to have music on the river."

But residents living across the Patchogue River from the restaurant, who complained last year that the noise carried over the water, opposed the application.

"For four years I've heard music from that same location. I think I have the right to sit in my living room or my backyard and hear nothing," said Cedar Avenue resident Carrie Logan. "I strongly oppose this permit . . . I shouldn't have to hear her music just

because she wants to make a buck."

The board split 3-3 in voting on the resolution, with Trustees Paul Pontieri, Paul Felice and Renee Alevas voting in favor of granting the permit. Mayor Franklin Leavandosky cast the deciding vote in favor of the measure.

Deputy Mayor Vincent Felice, however, predicted that the permit would open the way for other restaurants on the river to seek the same thing.

"The only problem I have with it is you have Steamers, On the Waterfront, Pier 66 and Sun Dek all right there. If we allow one permit, you can bet that next week they'll all be down," Felice said. "And if you give it to one, you cannot deny it to the rest."

Victor Yannacone, Jr. named Advance Man of the Year—

continued from page 3

dents, all of whom are now actively taking part in their local government.

Some described his antics in the board room as "a circus atmosphere," while others said it was "the voice of the people." No matter what it was, though, it drew people's interest, and caused many to pay attention to their local government for the first time.

For Yannacone, however, it was the same story as nearly every other public crusade he has launched in his career, many without being reimbursed, and some that actually cost him money.

"They don't need me, I'm not their leader. All I did was give them a voice for a short period of time while they

were gathering their own . . . What becomes of the Village of Patchogue rests squarely on the shoulders of the people who live here," he said. "Me? I'm just a simple country lawyer."

Yannacone began his legal-career with a similar public interest issue, after he and his father were arrested in 1959 while fishing off Crane Point in Old Field. The then 23-year-old, fresh out of law school, researched local property documents back to the colonial times, took on the law firm on Long Island, and proved in court that these "private" beaches were public lands, according to a 17th century charter. He won the case.

Almost from that day forward, his legal career was measured not by how

his cases changed the size of his bank account, but rather changed people's perceptions, and righted wrongs that he saw in the system.

He became known as the father of environmental law with a series of cases addressing the pollution of Long Island's eco-system, ranging from a lawsuit against Long Island duck farmers for polluting shellfishing grounds in the bays to the landmark 1966 case which resulted in the banning of the use of DDT. It was in a speech hastily written during a car ride to New Jersey that the name Environmental Defense Fund was coined, a group he founded along with South Country residents Dennis Puleston and Art Cooley.

His most famous case, however, became the massive class-action suit he brought against the U.S. government for spraying the defoliant Agent Orange on U.S. soldiers in Vietnam.

"This guy Frank McCarthy, who's friend had died of cancer after being sprayed with Agent Orange, took a blood oath to do something about it," Yannacone recalled, launching into one of many highly detailed memories of past causes that come to his lips frequently and easily. "He parked in my driveway in his old beat-up pickup truck and camped out there until I took his case."

The case eventually took up nearly 10 years of his life, costing him \$64,000

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Victor J. Yannacone

by Kevin Molloy

It's after midnight, and Victor Yannacone, Jr. is poring over court decisions and local laws from various villages and towns across Long Island. The search has gone on for hours, with him and some visitors peppering each other with questions and experiencing mood swings ranging from the exuberance of what seems to be a key discovery to furrowing brows of ponderance and disappointment, all the while with a reporter observing in the background, almost unnoticed.

Two walls are lined with bookshelves stocked with every imaginable subject, except law, ranging from Plato's *Republic*, best sellers on financial scandals of the '80s, environmental textbooks, and a whole collection dedicated to discrimination of various ethnic groups. Other walls bear momentos given to him and his practice, including a wooden plaque and slingshot thanking him for being "Still a David Among Goliaths" and a statuette bearing a favorite motto of his: "Sue the Bastards." At his feet lies a baritone saxophone in a battered case.

"A-ha!" he suddenly exclaims like an excited boy as he sits bolt upright, apparently finding something he was looking for. It's a brief moment of triumph before the eyes close halfway again and he leans back, patting his outstretched fingers together, a slower and more tired voice beginning to outline strategies of attack and defense that sound more like military tactics than preparations to speak before a village board.

The atmosphere within the attor-

ney's office at 39 Baker Street, really a converted first floor of a grey colonial Patchogue Village house, is anything but what you would expect at a nationally renowned law firm. It's more like when the smart kids in school stayed late, and were being bad. That's the way Yannacone has been since he began his career in law 32 years ago.

At the moment, the 56-year-old attorney is embroiled in his latest public battle: to improve the quality of life for residents in the Village of Patchogue and to secure peace officer or constable status for the village's code enforcement officers. It's the reason two Patchogue residents nominated him as their choice for the Long Island Advance Man of the Year.

After becoming frustrated with the pace of revitalization in Patchogue, and listening to the complaints of his neighbors, Yannacone went down to a village board meeting to voice his concerns, to defend his neighbors and neighborhood, he says. In typical Victor Yannacone style.

That style has been described by him as the Moshe Dayan Theory of Defending Israel, a massive assault and retaliation tactic he has used before in some of his most celebrated public causes and cases, including the banning of the pesticide DDT, the Agent Orange Case, and numerous others.

But what became twice-monthly tirades before the village board captured the attention of the people of Patchogue like no one else in recent years, drawing hundreds of people to a meeting that previously had been attended by only a handful of resi-

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Deanna Annis

by Susan Kane

She's been dubbed "The Elizabeth Taylor of Bellport" because of her seemingly-tireless efforts to raise money for the fight against AIDS.

But fundraising is only part of the mission Deanna Annis, the 1992 Long Island Advance Woman of the Year, has at times lovingly, at times reluctantly, embraced.

The Bellport wife, mother of five, community volunteer and AIDS activist has also waged war on the misconceptions, stigmas and fear that still surround the deadly disease.

"We need so much more education [about AIDS]," Annis said during a recent interview at her home, where she and her physician husband, Jonathan, each summer host the "Sunday by the Bay" AIDS fundraiser that draws hundreds of people to the local area and places Bellport in the national spotlight.

The annual benefit, which is sponsored by Stopping AIDS Together (StAT), the non-profit organization the Annises head, has raised close to \$2 million for AIDS care and research since it was first held in 1987.

Deanna Annis' commitment to the AIDS cause, however, does not end with Sunday by the Bay, the planning for which in and of itself consumes about seven months of her year, every year.

Annis also volunteers her time visiting and counseling people with AIDS and their families in North Bellport, an area which has been particularly hard hit by the disease, she said.

In addition, she works with the staff

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Woman of the Year

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the Annises' work in the community, the Bellport High School Student Council designated StAT as the recipient of its 1991-92 fundraising activities. The students also plan to donate the proceeds of this year's benefits to StAT, Annis said.

In the course of her work, Annis has hobnobbed with numerous celebrities from the entertainment and fashion worlds, including her own personal role model in the fight against AIDS, Liz Taylor. A photo of Annis and Taylor that was taken at an American

Foundation for AIDS Research fundraiser last year occupies a choice spot on a table in the Annises' living room.

Recent Sundays by the Bay have brought people such as Glenn Close, Isabella Rossellini, Dick Cavett, Lili Taylor, Stockard Channing, Geraldo Rivera and Peggy Cass to the Annis home.

Still, Annis speaks with just as much passion about her meetings with people who are not nearly as well known. People like the North Bellport grandmother who has already lost a son, daughter-in-law and several grand-

children to AIDS. Or the 29-year-old AIDS victim who recently left behind six children.

Despite the tremendous sadness she has encountered since 1986, when the death of a close friend to AIDS prodded her to get personally involved in the struggle to help end the disease, Annis insists the work she does is "more inspirational than depressing."

"Yes, I feel depressed sometimes, yes, I feel like I'm banging my head against the wall sometimes," she said. "But it's given me a deeper appreciation for life."

If there is a "message" in what she does — or in her life as a whole — it's simply, "what you say you can do, you can do," Annis said.

It's a message she tries to convey to the people with AIDS she counsels. She tells them about her own troubled start, abandoned by her mother at three months of age. She tells them about her first marriage to an "abusive" husband, about having three children to care for at the tender age of 24, about the importance of not giving up. Never.

"It doesn't really matter what your circumstances are," she said.

Man of the Year

and his son's college tuition money, and made Agent Orange a household word.

And it is with the same vigor that he is now fighting to improve Patchogue, he says.

"This village is my home," he said, recalling how his father settled in the very house his office is in after taking the Long Island Railroad as far east as it went, at the time, and then walked

in concentric circles until he found the first available house for sale. "I've spent many years improving the quality of life in places I don't live in, and I felt that the Village of Patchogue has deteriorated, and that the community leadership has lost touch with the people who live here."

That's not to say that he has no hopes for the village's future.

"The future of Patchogue can be so much greater than its past. It has made the transition from an old dying

community to a new, vigorously and vital growth center," he said. "Patchogue is a place where young professionals will soon come to live, because it will be the village of opportunity. It will be the place they want to raise their children."

Until that happens, though, Yannacone said he will be there to lend his voice in questioning the laws and decisions of local policy makers, and try to the best of his ability to make it a better place.

He will not, however, be their leader. And perhaps just as in the past he was ostracized from the Environmental Defense Fund and the Agent Orange lawsuit he started because of the tactics he uses, he feels some day he may no longer be wanted as the spokesperson for the residents.

"They don't need me. They don't need any leader. They will make of it what they want to make of it," he said. "It happens to all the movers and shakers."