Earthquake Coverage By Haitian Times Draws Prestigious CJR Attention

by Milford Prewitt

The editors of the Haitian Times are used to doing the interminable, tape-recording and taking photos in pursuit of their news coverage of the Haitian-American community and Haiti. But the script was flipped on them when the Columbia Journalism Review shadowed the Haitian Times editor as he led his staff’s coverage of Haiti’s devastating earthquake last year and mobilized to cover the recovery efforts there.

Despite operating out of the Pat Albert Building for the past three years and distributing the publication at bodegas and other stores up and down Flatbush in PLG and other Brooklyn and Queens neighborhoods, the Haitian Times doesn’t spend a drop of ink on community news.

“There are other local papers that deal with these issues,” Haiti Times editor Garry Pierre-Pierre, who founded the publication 13 years ago, says. “We don’t have much to invest there.”

That singular focus is what attracted the CJR to cover how the weekly — with only editorial staff — covered disaster and rebuilding.

In an article on its website in November titled “The Haitian Times Heads to Haiti,” the CJR reported how the deluge of phone calls to Pierre-Pierre’s office from worried Haitian-Americans in the days following the earthquake convinced him to cover the event himself, with help from another reporter already based in Haiti and a correspondent working from Miami.

The upbeat is that Pierre-Pierre, a former reporter for the New York Times, borrowed from that paper’s Pulitzer Prize-winning “Portraits of Grief” series — the mini-bios the Times ran every day for four months on every person who died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks — to fashion a similar approach, but largely focused on survivors.

“We are going to go neighborhood by neighborhood, just trying to tell as many human stories as possible,” Pierre-Pierre told the CJR. “We don’t have as much manpower or space, but on the Web we have space, and that is where the Internet is going to help us play the same role the big newspapers had in their print edition.”

In an interview with the Echo, Pierre-Pierre says the coverage by the CJR was flattering, but means little if the media and authorities are not exposing the corruption and slow pace of rebuilding that’s adding to the Haitian people’s misery.

“People, the earthquake, frankly, has consumed our news coverage,” Pierre-Pierre told the Echo. “Nothing comes close.”

He says he is so disgusted by the conditions and corruption in Haiti linked to the recovery that the Haitian Times, at the moment, endorses no charitable organizations involved in the rebuilding.

“We think right now people should not donate to Haiti,” he says. “There is too much money being squandered by NGOs. We need to hold them accountable and then decide if we should donate our hard earned money.”

Pierre-Pierre said neither he nor any of his staff lost family in the disaster, “but we all suffer because we lost all close friends.”

Pierre-Pierre estimates that there are roughly 200,000 people of Haitian descent in New York City, with two-thirds of them living in Brooklyn and Queens.

It was surprising to learn that there is not a French-language version of the Haitian Times. But, like his answer to explain why he does not focus on community news in New York City, he had a similar answer.

“The paper targets Haitian-Americans and foreigners who are interested in learning what’s happening in Haiti, so there is no need to be in French or Creole,” he states. “There are other papers who fill that void. In fact, we started the Haitian Times because there was no one targeting second generation Haitian-Americans.”

Blue Roost Soothers PLG with Down Home Comfort Foods

by Milford Prewitt

“Was that so good? I feel as if someone just hugged me,” the tall blonde woman exclaimed out loud with no shame or restraint upon finishing off a bowl of choice grits, bacon and biscuits at PLG’s newest restaurant, the down home Blue Roost.

Quick to the call, co-owner Linda Lee Billing, smiling ear-to-ear, embraced the infatuated guest like a genie out of a bottle.

Not a bad idea, gastronome marketer of a restaurant that at one time wanted to call itself The Homiesk Creek before the same kind of unlistched consumer input forced Billing, her partner Billy Clark and her brother and co-cook Neil Billing to reconsider their first choice for a name.

Without hesitation, the couple — being they friends or strangers — overwhelmingly warned the trix that any restaurant with the word “homies” was doomed for failure.

“We thought it was such a great name,” Linda sighs. “Home-cooked comfort foods

Blue Roost partners Linda Lee Billing and Billy Clark are all smiles at the plate of their new restaurant.

One signature dish that has caught some New Yorkers by surprise being Northerners in the Brunswick Stew, a Southern favorite that resembles some kind of chili but which Linda — who does most of the cooking — makes with corn, okra, chicken and pork, tomatoes and tomato sauce. The other popular house favorite is the Piedmont Pulled Pork Sandwich with vinegar sauce.

“I thought for sure customers were going to go for the classic, red tomato barbecue sauce,” Linda says. “But they are going for the venglar.”

Homemade grits, biscuits and gravy — and a flavorful coffee sourced through a South American farming cooperative — keeps the place busy during breakfast.

Linda, who worked in restaurants in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco before moving to New York City in 2002, and Neil cook all of Blue Roost’s dishes off-premise in a commercial kitchen they rent. The dishes are reheated and apportioned for the plates ordered on site.

She says she and Billy could have opened in larger places with kitchens on Archer Avenue or Rogers. But it wouldn’t have meant being outside the PLG’s main commercial strip and losing (continued on page 9).

Leone Lacaille Jeffers, Long-Time Resident of Fenimore 2, Dies at 92

Leone Lacaille Jeffers, a retired nurse’s aide who lived with her family on Fenimore for more than 40 years in one of those distinguished, two-bedroom apartments, died on New Year’s Day.

Resident of Fenimore 2, Dies at 92

For more than 40 years, Leone Lacaille Jeffers lived with her family on Fenimore 2, a two-bedroom apartment on the second floor of a green Art Deco building.

In an article on its website in November titled “The Haitian Times Heads to Haiti,” the CJR reported how the deluge of phone calls to Pierre-Pierre’s office from worried Haitian-Americans in the days following the earthquake convinced him to cover the event himself, with help from another reporter already based in Haiti and a correspondent working from Miami.

The upbeat is that Pierre-Pierre, a former reporter for the New York Times, borrowed from that paper’s Pulitzer Prize-winning “Portraits of Grief” series — the mini-bios the Times ran every day for four months on every person who died in the 9/11 terrorist attacks — to fashion a similar approach, but largely focused on survivors.

“We are going to go neighborhood by neighborhood, just trying to tell as many human stories as possible,” Pierre-Pierre told the CJR. “We don’t have as much manpower or space, but on the Web we have space, and that is where the Internet is going to help us play the same role the big newspapers had in their print edition.”

In an interview with the Echo, Pierre-Pierre says the coverage by the CJR was flattering, but means little if the media and authorities are not exposing the corruption and slow pace of rebuilding that’s adding to the Haitian people’s misery.

“We think right now people should not donate to Haiti,” he says. “There is too much money being squandered by NGOs. We need to hold them accountable and then decide if we should donate our hard earned money.”

Pierre-Pierre said neither he nor any of his staff lost family in the disaster, “but we all suffer because we lost all close friends.”

Pierre-Pierre estimates that there are roughly 200,000 people of Haitian descent in New York City, with two-thirds of them living in Brooklyn and Queens.

It was surprising to learn that there is not a French-language version of the Haitian Times. But, like his answer to explain why he does not focus on community news in New York City, he had a similar answer.

“The paper targets Haitian-Americans and foreigners who are interested in learning what’s happening in Haiti, so there is no need to be in French or Creole,” he states. “There are other papers who fill that void. In fact, we started the Haitian Times because there was no one targeting second generation Haitian-Americans.”

Blue Roost Soothers PLG with Down Home Comfort Foods

by Milford Prewitt

“Was that so good? I feel as if someone just hugged me,” the tall blonde woman exclaimed out loud with no shame or restraint upon finishing off a bowl of choice grits, bacon and biscuits at PLG’s newest restaurant, the down home Blue Roost.

Quick to the call, co-owner Linda Lee Billing, smiling ear-to-ear, embraced the infatuated guest like a genie out of a bottle.

Not a bad idea, gastronome marketer of a restaurant that at one time wanted to call itself The Homiesk Creek before the same kind of unlistched consumer input forced Billing, her partner Billy Clark and her brother and co-cook Neil Billing to reconsider their first choice for a name.

Without hesitation, the couple — being they friends or strangers — overwhelmingly warned the trix that any restaurant with the word “homies” was doomed for failure.

“We thought it was such a great name,” Linda sighs. “Home-cooked comfort foods

Blue Roost partners Linda Lee Billing and Billy Clark are all smiles at the plate of their new restaurant.

One signature dish that has caught some New Yorkers by surprise being Northerners in the Brunswick Stew, a Southern favorite that resembles some kind of chili but which Linda — who does most of the cooking — makes with corn, okra, chicken and pork, tomatoes and tomato sauce. The other popular house favorite is the Piedmont Pulled Pork Sandwich with vinegar sauce.

“I thought for sure customers were going to go for the classic, red tomato barbecue sauce,” Linda says. “But they are going for the venglar.”

Homemade grits, biscuits and gravy — and a flavorful coffee sourced through a South American farming cooperative — keeps the place busy during breakfast.

Linda, who worked in restaurants in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco before moving to New York City in 2002, and Neil cook all of Blue Roost’s dishes off-premise in a commercial kitchen they rent. The dishes are reheated and apportioned for the plates ordered on site.

She says she and Billy could have opened in larger places with kitchens on Archer Avenue or Rogers. But it wouldn’t have meant being outside the PLG’s main commercial strip and losing (continued on page 9).
Prospect Lefferts Gardens: A neighborhood that has been on the rise for a while, but the recent surge in interest has led to some challenges. The area has seen a significant increase in housing prices, and the current focus is on the preservation of the neighborhood's character. The community is working to maintain its unique atmosphere and appeal, despite the economic pressures that come with increased demand and development.
PLG Shutterbugs Catch the Beauty and the Beast in the Blizzards

Whether it takes you back to your childhood, inspires your reverence of Nature, makes you groan from the inconvenience of school and business closings, or moan about a sore back from shoveling, the day after a deep snow makes for some compelling photography.

The two blizzards that buried the city brought out the shutterbug in Sheryl Foster, a 27-year resident of Rutland 2; Kim Santoro, an artist who lives on Rutland 1; and Echo editor Milford Prewitt, who lives on Midwood 1.

Foster and Santoro took their pictures all around the neighborhood the day after the Dec. 26 storm. Prewitt took his around his house the day after the January blizzard.

DNA MATCH NABS PLG'S SERIAL RAPIST

A 21-year-old local man who was arrested for criminal trespass and dealing marijuana has been charged in the rapes of two neighborhood women—and is being investigated for a third sexual assault—the 75th Precinct police report.

Community Affairs Officer Vincent Martinos said investigators believe the man is the PLG serial rapist who had been attacking young women as they entered their apartment buildings over the past 18 months. His pattern was to follow a lone woman into her building late at night or very early in the morning, catch the elevator with the victim to her floor, and force her inside her apartment where she was assaulted.

The suspect, who lived at 165 Ocean Avenue, was originally arrested for criminal trespass and dealing drugs inside the lobby of another apartment building. He was released after submitting a sample of his DNA. About a day later, police re-arrested the man in connection to the December 26 rape of a woman who lived in the apartment building at 1 Midwood Street and a rape in an apartment building at Flatbush and Bedford during the summer.

Here, Trixie! Here, Trixie! Come Here!

PLG Welcomes First Pet Supply Store

by Mary Miller

The story behind the new pet food and accessory store from owners Robert Salmieri and Richard Esposito turns on two guys with dogs named Trixie: a shepherd/border mix for Robert and an Irish terrier for Richard. Those entrepreneurs met when they were calling their identically-named dogs in Prospect Park.

Robert, a Brooklyn native but recent (two year) arrival to Lefferts Manor, is an artist who was interested in developing a business venture. Richard, currently living in Windsor Terrace, has had a background in the bar and restaurant business and had been thinking about opening a business on this side of Prospect Park. Jeffrey Welch, a Manor resident, real estate broker and owner of a French bakery, suggested a pet supply store.

This propitious network of canines and humans has resulted in a lovely new attraction on Flatbush Avenue between Midwood and Maple Streets.

Don't think that Trixie's is all about dogs, however. Although many residents are dog lovers, the businessmen report half their sales are for cat foods and accessories and they have learned that we harbor exotic birds such as African gray parrots and cockatiels whose owners have special requests.

Trixie's is open 11 a.m.–7:30 p.m. daily, except Sundays when it closes at 6. You will notice a regular stream of shoppers going in and out, because not only does the store provide a range of products at different price points, Robert and Richard have established a very neighborly vibe and provide thoughtful advice to pet owners.

I benefited from their suggestions on how to perk up the appetite of a deaf, toothless, 22-year-old cat (try really smelly canned cat food) and Blackie, who was 24 hours from The Last Trip, came around and is again enjoying his feline life. (Whether it is the 8th or 9th, who knows?)

The bottom line is: Flatbush Avenue has a much-needed amenity. No need to go to Park Slope for quality pet products or settle for grocery store brands. Trixie's is here!
“PRINTS OF THE MASTERS”
The Medgar Evers College Art Committee (MECAC), in collaboration with the Dorsey Art Club of its Art Gallery at Brooklyn, proudly presents Prints of the Masters, an art exhibit in tribute to the late Lawrence Peter Dorsey.

The exhibit will run February 3–March 10, 2011 at Academic Building (AB1), 1638 Bedford Avenue, Brooklyn.

The event is free and open to the public.

PLG Arts Jazz Night

“PLG Arts Jazz Night” at the Inkwell has all the ingredients a relaxing jazz supper club should have. It features creative, often breakthrough musicians; the cover charge is just $5; the kitchen serves up a tasty mix of Southern and soul food favorites; the 45-seat performance space and dining room is acoustically separated from the cocktail bar and lounge up front; and best of all, located at 408 Rogers Avenue between Sterling and Lefferts, it’s right around the corner no matter where you live in Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

But for all those attractions, PLG Arts Jazz Night lacks a major ingredient: you and your neighbors as patrons to support and enjoy this undiscovered neighborhood gem.

What’s wrong with this picture?

“I think we don’t get the traffic we should get because people consider it far away,” says Rina Kleege, a board member of PLG Arts who founded and launched the jazz night series shortly after the Inkwell Jazz Comedy Café debuted in 2005.

“We started Jazz Night as a way to provide a venue for local musicians to play,” says Kleege, “to provide a place where PLG residents can go to hear great music; relax and meet their neighbors at a reasonable price; and to foster the arts in our wonderful neighborhood.”

But it’s been daunting to drum up neighborhood support, she sighs.

“I just think people don’t want to go that far east.”

“It’s not on the beaten path like the spots on Lincoln Rd. that are right there when you get off the subway. It’s in the middle of a block, a block away from the subway stop on Sterling—and, let’s face it, if you live on this side [the Flatbush and Ocean Ave corridors] you wouldn’t block away from the subway stop on Sterling—and, let’s face it, if you don’t want to go to the place, you won’t go. And it’s not in a major traffic area.”

Jazz Night is always on the second Thursday of each month in the winter and increases to the second and fourth Thursday of every month in the warmer seasons. Stay up to date by visiting plgarts.org.

Gino’s Owners Emerge Unscathed in Frightening Car Crash

Gino and Mary Seta, the viable spirits of hospitality who own and operate Gino’setcha and Pizza on Flatbush near Lincoln Rd., escaped serious injury when their car skidded out on ice, bounced off the rear of a car in front of them, and then slammed into a concrete median wall on the Belt Parkway. Both husband and wife emerged from the accident unjured and virtually unscathed though their 2003 Nissan Maxima was totaled, with the front damaged beyond all repair, crushed up to the firewall.

The accident happened on February 2, a few days after the second snow storm when thawing daytime temperatures plummeted to sub-freezing at night and turned roadways into sheets of ice. The Setas were on their way to their Babylon, Long Island home after closing the restaurant and saw on the horizon traffic jams, numerous accidents and emergency vehicles everywhere.

Gino, who was driving, applied the brakes when he came within several dozen yards of a car in front of him. But his car kept moving at 40 miles per hour on the icy slick road when he said to Mary, “We’re not going to make it. God help us.”

Despite his best efforts to avoid hitting the car, Gino said he bumped off the rear of the other vehicle and slammed into a concrete median barrier. With Mary’s door usable to open, Gino pulled his wife across the front seats through his door to escape the car. Gino said the car hit the Setas didn’t scratch.

Although Mary bled a bit from a small cut near one eye caused by the inflating airbag, she and Gino refused medical attention from nearby emergency services and medical workers who rushed to their aid and across other accidents on the road. Both declined to go to the hospital.

“I know what bothered Mary the most,” says Gino, “the cold! We could have been killed and she’s complaining about how cold it is.”

One of their sons picked them up at the crash site and took them home.

“And we came back to work the very next day,” Mary said. “We had an angel looking out for us that night.”

Robert Marvin Shows Landscape Photographs

Robert Marvin, board member of both the LMA and PLG Arts, debuted his second career as a landscape photographer with an exhibition at K-Dog and Dunebuggy café. Titled “Texture, Tone & Detail,” the exhibit featured a series of highly textured black-and-white prints of decrepit and decaying abandoned buildings hidden in a forest near Marvin’s summer home in Vermont. To see the portfolio or to purchase prints, contact him at marvibl@earthlink.net.

Dorsey Art Club Keeps Dorsey Gallery Alive and Well

by Jennifer Stewart

Many people wondered what would happen to the Dorsey Art Gallery, a Brooklyn institution on Rogers Avenue, after the death of the founder Lawrence Peter Dorsey, a Grand Master of African-American art. Little did they know that he had selected a group of close friends, family and collectors to carry on his vision and passion for the Dorsey Art Club.

In the words of artist and DAC board member Karl McIntosh: “We must do all we can to keep the gallery that Ernest Chrichlow, Tom Feelings, Elizabeth Catlett, Joseph Delauro, James Brooks visited, just to mention a few, open and functioning.”

Since Dorsey’s death in 2007 at 88, the art club, with the complete support of his daughter Laurette Jackson, has continued to operate the gallery.

While the framing business has ceased to exist, the Gallery continues to thrive. In addition to the art shows and the annual Christmas Auction, there are programs to benefit artists, collectors, and the community at large.

Renowned painter and sculptor Otto Neals leads a stimulating workshop every second Saturday for artists interested in creating etchings and linocuts. On Wednesday nights, he holds a class for the people who want to learn drawing techniques. Otto has been affiliated with the Bob Blackburn printmaking workshop for many years, both as an artist and a teacher.

LMA Board Members

President Ben Edwards
Vice-President Vivian Friedman
Secretary Martin Friedman
Treasurer Carole Schaffer

LMA Board Members

President Ben Edwards
Vice President Vivian Friedman
Secretary Martin Friedman
Treasurer Carole Schaffer

Foster Henry . . . . . . . . 718-282-0272
Robert Woelfling . . . . 718-826-2741
Paul Morin . . . . . . . . . . 718-826-1202
Mary Miller . . . . . . . . . 718-693-5109
Foster Henry . . . . . . . . 718-282-0272
Ben Edwards . . . . . . . . 718-282-1743
Vince Lisi . . . . . . . . . 718-753-1050
Clare Dees . . . . . . . . . 718-282-1743
Linda Hill . . . . . . . . . 718-282-3372
Louise Daniel . . . . . 718-282-3372
Willard Roberts . . . . 718-287-4392
Mary Miller . . . . . 718-826-5109
Jerry Bennett . . . . . . 718-826-2156
Robert Woelfling . . . . 718-284-4822
William Bates . . . . . 718-826-5109
Melinda Remmel . . . . 718-826-1202
Louise Daniel . . . . . 718-826-3792
Paul Morin . . . . . . . . 718-826-2156
Vince Lisi . . . . . . . . 718-282-3372
Mary Miller . . . . . 718-826-5109
Paul Morin . . . . . . . . 718-826-1202
Robert Woelfling . . . . 718-826-2741

Enjoy the spring thaw, a cup of coffee, see neighbors you haven’t seen since December on Saturday, 4/2, 10 a.m.—noon at the Church of the Evangel, Bedford Avenue between Hawthorne and Winthrop

April 30 Annual Flower Barrel Planting

The Lefferts Manor Association will be planting flowers in our iconic sidewalk whiskey barrels on Saturday, 4/30 starting at 10 a.m., rain or shine. Volunteer planters are welcome. Bring your gloves, tools and a bag for trash. For more information, call Mary Miller at 718-593-5065