Annual PLG House Tour Salutes Neighborhood’s Long March to Diversity

by Milford Prewitt and Mary Miller

For the 46th year in a row, a handful of neighbors throughout Prospect Lefferts Gardens will let strangers roam through their immaculately decorated homes to draw inspiration from the restoration and preservation of century-old houses.

But showing off interior designs, great art, fine furniture, beautiful gardens or crafty uses of space is the least important part of the house tour.

When the Prospect Lefferts Gardens Neighborhood Association launched the first house tour (which the Lefferts Manor Association took over a few years later) the intent was to encourage people, people of all races, to move here, raise families and make good neighbors.

The house tour was the icing on the cake, to show that “integrated” neighborhoods could function in harmony and that these century-old homes took caring neighbors, working with others, to keep them beautiful.

The house tour was vital at that time because unscrupulous real estate agents were blockbusting—chasing white families away with alarms that blacks were moving in and would depress home values and bring crime with them.

PLG’s home prices in the early 1970s ranged from the mid-$40,000s to the mid-$50,000s.

“I can still remember the time in the 1970s when gentrifiers got excited when a house hit $100,000,” says Bob Marvin, a Lefferts Manor Association board member and neighborhood historian, who has lived on Midwood II since 1974. Today, it’s not uncommon for a home in the Lefferts Manor Historic District to sell for $2 million-plus.

At those kind of prices in this era of gentrification, it’s easy to wonder if the house tour is ever needed to draw attention here. As _New York Times_ put it a few years ago, PLG is “on the map.”

But it’s also a petri dish for watching how gentrification changes neighborhoods and makes life good for some and tough for others.

And while, like climate change, the negatives of gentrification seem to resist easy solutions, here’s hoping our ongoing legacy survives the turbulence to come.

A yellow brick 1941 apartment building reveals its Art Deco touches in a two bedroom apartment with original... (continued on page 2)
Restoring a Parkside Gem—Plus Honeybees!

by Kendall Christiansen

French-speaking, yogurt-exploring kids and beekeeping small fry that specializing in rescuing inventory from emerging markets in underdeveloped U.S. villages. His service as a colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves takes him to California for his expertise in Asia-Pacific military policy.

Looking for a space to continue their expanding family, they moved to Brooklyn and found PLG so as to be near Prospect Park. Like many neighbors, they love old houses, and are also in the midst of renovating a nearby two-family as rentable. The house is investor-friendly and sometimes times-paint-patterned home projects, Nicole has especially enjoyed adding reading nooks and other secret spaces to their artsy-era home, and opening up the kitchen to make it suitable for whole-family cooking—and science experiments, like the aforementioned yogurt.

Blaise and Nicole Zandoli are nearing ten years on the block, and both attended Maple Street School. A few years later, the couple noticed a tiny newspaper ad in Manhattan working in public relations. After several years in Manhattan working in public relations. After several years

1/2), and deeply involved in neighborhood activities—a neighborhood of mothers who deliver home-cooked meals for hungry children and a knitting group that sells locally produced honey. Nicole and Roberta Woelfling are a member of the board of the Lefferts Manor Association. Kendall Christiansen is a longtime resident of Maple II and a member of the board of the Lefferts Manor Association.

On a recent April afternoon, I met with Renata Gomos on the deck overlooking her lovely garden. We had a glass of delicious white wine (more on that later), and discussed how she and her family came to reside on Maple Street.

About wine: Howard recently sold his television production company (which he had operated since 1997) and joined forces with Randy Berger (another longtime PLG resident) to open a wine and spirits store. “Drink” is a fantastic new addition to the neighborhood (a story about the venture appears on page 3). Meanwhile, the talented knitter that she is, Renata has her own dream—to open a yarn shop someday.

Along with putting energy into their home, Howard and Renata are dynamic members of PLG: Renata is a founding member of the Lefferts Garden Charter School, served on the board of the Maple Street School, and helped to start a book club. The couple is active in many block activities as well; they have generously powered the block party’s bouncy house on more than one occasion!

About wine: Howard, previously sold his television production company (which he had operated since 1997) and joined forces with Randy Berger (another longtime PLG resident) to open a wine and spirits store. “Drink” is a fabulous new addition to the neighborhood (a story about the venture appears on page 3). Meanwhile, the talented knitter that she is, Renata has her own dream—to open a yarn shop someday.

The first order of business was to tear up the carpeting. The kitchen was also renovated early on. Just recently, the couple completed a more thorough renovation, including a redesign of the kitchen and a total overhaul of the basement level. Before the renovation, the basement had a outdated club-like atmosphere including a coat check, full bar, and even a bin for returnable bottles, cans, and even a two-ton safe (subsequently removed at significant expense). While the décor was 1960s-era, the vibe was that of a Prohibition-era speakeasy.

The successive floor featured a beamed ceiling in the dining room. The open-plan basement cleverly inserted under the stairs to the upper level, and the basement itself was resurrected as a media room and a library for Renata’s children. The new business along the avenues. This year PLGArts will provide music at the refreshment stop. The couple is active in many block activities as well; they have generously powered the block party’s bouncy house on more than one occasion!

About wine: Howard, previously sold his television production company (which he had operated since 1997) and joined forces with Randy Berger (another longtime PLG resident) to open a wine and spirits store. “Drink” is a fabulous new addition to the neighborhood (a story about the venture appears on page 3). Meanwhile, the talented knitter that she is, Renata has her own dream—to open a yarn shop someday.

The successive floor featured a beamed ceiling in the dining room. The open-plan basement cleverly inserted under the stairs to the upper level, and the basement itself was resurrected as a media room and a library for Renata’s children. The new business along the avenues. This year PLGArts will provide music at the refreshment stop. The couple is active in many block activities as well; they have generously powered the block party’s bouncy house on more than one occasion!

About wine: Howard, previously sold his television production company (which he had operated since 1997) and joined forces with Randy Berger (another longtime PLG resident) to open a wine and spirits store. “Drink” is a fabulous new addition to the neighborhood (a story about the venture appears on page 3). Meanwhile, the talented knitter that she is, Renata has her own dream—to open a yarn shop someday.

The successive floor featured a beamed ceiling in the dining room. The open-plan basement cleverly inserted under the stairs to the upper level, and the basement itself was resurrected as a media room and a library for Renata’s children. The new business along the avenues. This year PLGArts will provide music at the refreshment stop. The couple is active in many block activities as well; they have generously powered the block party’s bouncy house on more than one occasion!

About wine: Howard, previously sold his television production company (which he had operated since 1997) and joined forces with Randy Berger (another longtime PLG resident) to open a wine and spirits store. “Drink” is a fabulous new addition to the neighborhood (a story about the venture appears on page 3). Meanwhile, the talented knitter that she is, Renata has her own dream—to open a yarn shop someday.
New Win and Spirits Shop Aims to Serve a Changing PLG

Those ubiquitous bulletproof Plexiglas walls that separate shoppers from cashiers in many Brooklyn wine stores are blissfully missing at Drink, the new wine and spirits store in Prospect Lefferts Gardens. That absent security is but one of the many design features and marketing approaches that highlight just how smart Drink’s founders are in recognizing that the times are changing in PLG. It also helps that they are long-time residents of the neighborhood and are witnessing those changes first hand.

Drink is located on Flatbush Avenue, on the neighborhood’s northeast end, conveniently near the subway entrance with the Africa mural.

With its all-wallet-sizes-welcomed marketing strategy, product mix, inviting-open floor plan and novel shelf design, Drink aims to serve learned connoisseurs, educate budding wine lovers, and be a convenient stop for those looking for a good bottle with tonight’s dinner.

Fenimore Street’s 65. Fenimore proved much of this six years ago with its sophisticated wine retailing that eschewed Plexiglas in favor of a warm inviting space, weekly tastings and knowledgeable owners.

But Drink seems to be more focused on merchandising wine and spirits to parallel the neighborhood’s rising affluence, even though its owners state that opening somewhere in PLG was a higher priority than following the money.

“We would have done this six or seven years ago?” asks co-owner Randy Berger, a securities lawyer and Rutland Road resident since 1999, repeating a reporter’s question.

“That’s right, he recalls a long, deliberate and sometimes frustrations search he and his partner, Howard Gibbins, went through looking for the right space in PLG before landing on Flatbush.

“We knew that if we were going to offer this product to our customers, we had to make sure that there is demand, he continues. “But we didn’t focus on the neighborhood’s gentrification. We picked this because this is our neighborhood. We live here.”

Gibbins, formerly the owner of a film production company who has lived on Maple St. for 26 years, agrees with Berger that Drink could not have happened any sooner.

He and Berger bought the building that houses Drink. The location had not been renovated or upgraded in decades, Gibbins suspects.

Utilizing neighborhood talent and expertise, Rutland Rd. architect and Lefferts Manor Association board member Roberta Wielingh designed the space. Her drawings included a wavy, serpentine shelf system that Gibbins says breaks the monotony and sameness of wine stores that use tight, boxy shelving to display inventory.

“We wanted to create something that was open, fluid and user-friendly,“ Gibbins notes.

Drink’s onsite wine expert, inventory manager, and tasting guide is industry veteran Paul Arena. Taking advantage of the shelving design, Arena displays the globally sourced inventory, which is supported by a variety of small business owners, most recently a bodega. The building had been not been renovated or upgraded, in decades, Gibbins suspects.

Prices are hand-painted on the bottles and reflect the wide range of offerings, from a $14 Italian red all the way up to a $468 red Bordeaux.

Drink is open every day. Monday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday, noon until 8.
New 71st Precinct Chief Fights Crime with Community Engagement

Ray Ramali (continued from page 1)
a military photographer during the Korean War. While work -
ing as a photographer at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio,
he flew in the huge troop and cargo plane called the CXC-9.
Ray loved this plane and many years later he would fight hard
for the aircraft’s preservation.
Ray moved back to Brooklyn after the war and, in 1957,
bought the house on Rutland using the GI bill. He married
Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for
47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an indepen-
dent photographer. He worked for well-known companies
such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.
He photo-documented various New York neighborhoods
and took photos of many celebrities, politicians and digni-
taries.
Doris died in 2006 and her service was held at Church
of the Evangel where Ray sang in the choir and was a deacon.

Saturday, May 21 is It’s My Park! Day in Prospect Park
Join the Lefferts Manor Association to help beautify your
beautiful Prospect Park. Lefferts Manor Association will
join the effort to care for Brooklyn’s most spectacular green space with brushes, shovels, rakes, and trash grabbers. 10:00am-1:00pm. Meet near 16th Street. Advance registration required. Call (718) 287-3400 for more information.

For a stronger community, join the
Lefferts Manor Association
MANOR RESIDENTS:
1 (we subscribe to LMA efforts to improve our neighborhood as a community of historic, landmarked, single-family homes. Dues: $40.00 per household or 2-person senior citizen household.
NON-RESIDENT FRIENDS:
1 (we support the work of the LMA and would like to contribute to their efforts.

ADDRESS
TELEPHONE
E-MAIL
Enclosed is my check for $5.00

Dues cover January through December. Make checks payable to Lefferts Manor Association. Send payment and form to: Martin Friedman, 214 Rutland Rd., Brooklyn, NY 11225 or drop in the mail slot at 214 Rutland Rd.

ECHO Seeks Home Distributors for Non-Moran Blocks
The Echo is seeking help distributing copies on blocks that are in PLG but not in the Manor. If you or someone you know would like to volunteer, please contact the editor at milfordprewitt@aol.com.

Ray Ramali, 95, a decorated marine and a military photographer, died on April 6.
Ray was born on December 14, 1921, in New York City. He married Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for 47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an independent photographer. He worked for well-known companies such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.

ECHO Trivia: Ray was one of three brothers serving in the NYPD.

by Milford Prewitt

Lefferts Manor Association
President
Bill Butts, Webmaster, bbutts@leffertsmans.org
Vice President
Dorothy Prewitt
Secretary
Roberta Woelfling
Treasurer
Melvin Hunter
Board Members
Ray Ramali, 95, a decorated marine and a military photographer, died on April 6.
Ray was born on December 14, 1921, in New York City. He married Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for 47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an independent photographer. He worked for well-known companies such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.

ECHO Trivia: Ray was one of three brothers serving in the NYPD.

by Milford Prewitt

Lefferts Manor Association
President
Bill Butts, Webmaster, bbutts@leffertsmans.org
Vice President
Dorothy Prewitt
Secretary
Roberta Woelfling
Treasurer
Melvin Hunter
Board Members
Ray Ramali, 95, a decorated marine and a military photographer, died on April 6.
Ray was born on December 14, 1921, in New York City. He married Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for 47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an independent photographer. He worked for well-known companies such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.

ECHO Trivia: Ray was one of three brothers serving in the NYPD.

by Milford Prewitt

Lefferts Manor Association
President
Bill Butts, Webmaster, bbutts@leffertsmans.org
Vice President
Dorothy Prewitt
Secretary
Roberta Woelfling
Treasurer
Melvin Hunter
Board Members
Ray Ramali, 95, a decorated marine and a military photographer, died on April 6.
Ray was born on December 14, 1921, in New York City. He married Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for 47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an independent photographer. He worked for well-known companies such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.

ECHO Trivia: Ray was one of three brothers serving in the NYPD.

by Milford Prewitt

Lefferts Manor Association
President
Bill Butts, Webmaster, bbutts@leffertsmans.org
Vice President
Dorothy Prewitt
Secretary
Roberta Woelfling
Treasurer
Melvin Hunter
Board Members
Ray Ramali, 95, a decorated marine and a military photographer, died on April 6.
Ray was born on December 14, 1921, in New York City. He married Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for 47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an independent photographer. He worked for well-known companies such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.

ECHO Trivia: Ray was one of three brothers serving in the NYPD.

by Milford Prewitt

Lefferts Manor Association
President
Bill Butts, Webmaster, bbutts@leffertsmans.org
Vice President
Dorothy Prewitt
Secretary
Roberta Woelfling
Treasurer
Melvin Hunter
Board Members
Ray Ramali, 95, a decorated marine and a military photographer, died on April 6.
Ray was born on December 14, 1921, in New York City. He married Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for 47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an independent photographer. He worked for well-known companies such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.

ECHO Trivia: Ray was one of three brothers serving in the NYPD.

by Milford Prewitt

Lefferts Manor Association
President
Bill Butts, Webmaster, bbutts@leffertsmans.org
Vice President
Dorothy Prewitt
Secretary
Roberta Woelfling
Treasurer
Melvin Hunter
Board Members
Ray Ramali, 95, a decorated marine and a military photographer, died on April 6.
Ray was born on December 14, 1921, in New York City. He married Doris De rringer in 1958, and they have been living there for 47 years and happily raised two sons in the house.
Ray had a successful and diversified career as an independent photographer. He worked for well-known companies such as American Express, Eversole and Lane Bryant.

ECHO Trivia: Ray was one of three brothers serving in the NYPD.