

PROJECT UPDATE



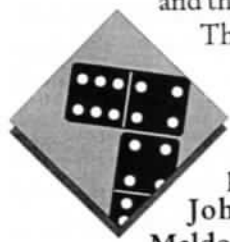
Inside: "Set Up The Joke"
Contest Winners!

VOLUME 27

MARCH, 1998

FANS KNOCK EACH OTHER OVER TO SEE *THE DOMINO EFFECT*

This year the Project season started off with a bang when seven veterans of many Project programs were pegged to participate in Playback. Playback is the one where the kid writes a play, the adult writes a response and then the two plays are performed together.



The theme was *The Domino Effect*, which meant that the adults' "answer play" demonstrated the repercussions of the action in the kid's play. This year's participants were: Freddy Matos, Tessa John-Connor, Zsuzsa Mysak, Evelyn Maldonado, Eddie Zambrano, Jonsi Smith,

and Ray Ocasio. The group headed up to Buzzard's Bay, Massachusetts last October to enjoy summer's last gasp at the home of Peter and Helen Randolph. While away at the Randolph seaside paradise, boats were navigated, miniature golf was mastered (top score: Ray O.) and, most importantly, plays were written.

Back in New York we took our actors and plays over to **The Directors Company**, where we mounted the whole shebang for a weekend in November. Those of you brave enough to come out to see what's on the minds of teenagers today were treated to the sight of kids blowing off their homework in favor of basketball in *Basketball Dreams* by Freddie. That play also gave us the opportunity and privilege of seeing **Keith Reddin** in a dress! We saw what happened when Death, faced with a career crisis, decided to become a used car saleswoman in *Cars "R" Us* by Tessa. Zsuzsa penned *Don't Judge a Book By Its Cover* which showed a girl forced to confront her prejudices about the homeless. Evelyn Maldonado treated us to the travails of a girl turned into a squirrel by a vengeful tree in *The Girl Who Deserved Better*. Boxers became clowns who were becoming in their boxers in *Change for a Rematch*

by Eddie Z. *Thoughtful Things* by Jonsi Smith showed what happens when you discover a way to make people REALLY tell the truth, and finally, *The Seventh Commandment*, by Ray Ocasio, chronicled a man's downfall and the consequences of murder.

Special shout-outs to Denise Burse, Jose Dominguez, Jack Gwaltney, Elizabeth Keiser, Bruce MacVittie, Tim Nelson, Keith Reddin, Jacquelyn Reingold, Alison Tatlock, and Susan Vitucci for their dramaturgy, playwriting, and acting contributions. MB

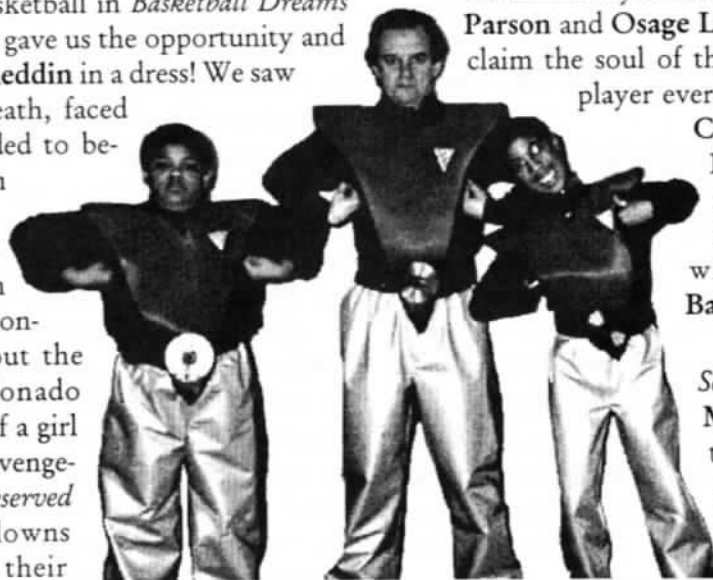
PROJECT HITS THE JACKPOT WITH THE 2-ON-2'S

You're a Project kid and you've written a couple of plays and acted with a couple of adults in other plays. What's next? Well, you would be promoted to the Project's Two-on-Two Program where two kids act in a play written by an adult and directed by another one, and that's exactly what happened to twelve kids in our January production, *The*



Luck of the Draw. Susan Kim's *The Devil's in the Details* was directed by Martha Banta and performed by Tanika Parson and Osage Lewis and featured a devil come to claim the soul of the greatest 12 year-old basketball player ever. *Saving Luck* featured a scientist, Candy Godoy, and a paratrooper, David Dominique, who need to save Henry "Luck" Ofthuhdraw from the evil Sam Dexor (both of whom were played by George Babiak).

Willie Reale wrote *A Little Soul Searching* which featured Marcsi Mysak and Hakim Latimore as two souls who unfairly get reassigned to a life on crummy old Earth. It was ably directed by Stephen Haff. Noel Polanco and William Brown showed us what



Noel Polanco, George Babiak, and William Brown in *The Button*

life is like in the humorless future in *The Button*, written by **Michael Bernard** and directed by **Taro Alexander**. **Rick Dresser** gave us *The Ballad of Fast Tony* which was directed by **Joe White** and featured **Eddie Cooper** as a restaurateur with an overbooked brunch and **Tony Santiago** as the Fastest Draw in the West. Finally, **Jaya Rosado** was a Vegas showgirl with no sense of humor and **Zsuzsa Mysak** her Fairy Godmother of Silliness in *How to Win Friends and Influence Others* by **Adrienne Shelly** and directed by **Lisa Benavides**. MB

WILD NEW KIDS, WILD NEW PLAYS

Before they get to step onto a stage themselves, all new Project kids must first write a play ("all actors should do that," grumble the playwrights among our readers). Our fall playmaking class concluded with nine new works written on the theme "Wild Life: The Uninhibited Plays," and performed in December at **Primary Stages**.

Steven Vasquez explored the vicissitudes of love and the efficacy of giant blocks of ice on head injuries in *A Terrible Day*, which featured **Reed Birney** and **Melody Cooper**. Giraffes and monkeys are fiercely competitive in their professional lives, according to **Chanel Christiansen** in $E \times A = A$, with **Nancy Giles** and **Taro Alexander**. **Ali Marsh** and **William Christian** learned how warm an igloo really can be in **Charina Corbett's** *Cheetah and Bear*.

In **Yazzy Troche's** *I Want Those Sneakers* a little girl (**Laura Jean Smith**) discovered what happens when you steal money from a father (**Alex Draper**). Animals were at odds once again in **Isaac Trujillo's** *The Cat That Taught the Dog and the Dog That Taught the Cat* with **Yusef Bulos** and **Kaleda Davis**. **Patricia Triana** and **Sharon Washington** faced the spirit of a young girl's father (played with enormous dignity and power by **Arthur French**) in *The Friendly Ghost* by **Zaida Natera**.

In *Mark and Ashley's Christmas*, by **Joel Lind**, an unemployed grizzly (**Frank Wood**) and his adopted polar bear sister (**Nancy O'Connor**) found the true spirit of gift-giving. Finally, in *All About Shopping*, by **Lorraine Calderon**, a daughter (**Lisa Benavides**) comes to grips with her parents' broken marriage after meeting a great many people and a talking **Barbie** doll, all played by **Dana Ivey**.

Our nascent playwrights were assisted by the following dramaturgs and directors: **Josh Astrachan**, **Michael Bernard**, **Julie Boyd**, **Jose Dominguez**, **Willy Holtzman**, **Suzen Murakoshi**, **Willie Reale**, **Robert Shaffron**, **John Steber**, and **Max Wilk**. We also thank **Tom Carozza** for portraying two rather unusual salesmen.



ADAM SHANOSKY

The whole magilla was paid for by the **Jonathan Larson Foundation for the Performing Arts**. We received the first-ever grant from this foundation and the kids did 'em proud. GB

FITS OF BENEFITS

Yup, we've got it! Benefit Fever! A guy can't sneeze around here without The 52nd Street Project selling tickets to watch him do it.

In December, **Cliff Fagin** and **The Bottom Line** produced **New York Noël** — a holiday happening with performers **Suzzy Roche**, **Rosanne Cash**, **Iris Dement**, **Loudon Wainwright III**, **Dee Carstensen**, **Andrea Marcovici**, **David Massengill** and the Project's own **Jayne Rosado**. The event raised \$3,600 for the Project. **Jayne** prepared for the "Silver Bells" grand finale with an **Elvis Presley** CD. "I liked singing with the King," he said.

Those clever **Coen** brothers, **Joel** and **Ethan**, have done it again with their newest film, *The Big Lebowski*. Together with **Gramercy Pictures** and **RCN** they arranged a world premiere of the film to benefit the Project and the **New York Academy of Art** (Thanks, **Claudia Gray** at **Gramercy** and **Simone Martel** of **Martel Productions** for all your help). The event included a lavish bowling fiesta, the highlight of which was the volunteers' entrance wearing the bowling pin headdresses from the film's dream sequence. **Willie** wants to wear one around the office, but **Carol** is afraid it may undermine the nominal respect the staff normally accords him.

GO WEST, YOUNG MAN...

AND WOMAN...AND OLD MAN AND OLD WOMAN...AND MIDDLE-AGED MAN AND WOMAN...AND KID...AND...

You may have dozens of invitations flooding your mailbox this benefit season, but we know in your heart there are only two things you're burning to know: where and when is **The Project's Annual Gala**?

This year, we've moved to the **Puck Building** where we will have much more room. No getting mooshed in the moo-shu this year, no sirreebob! **The Wild, Wild West** (of **Tenth Avenue**) **Bar-Bee-Cue** and **Show-Down** will feature enough hickory-chicory food to fill a coupla chuckwagons, plus a spaghetti-western script from the smokin' wits of **Willie Reale**, **Michael Bernard** and **Lewis Black**. Yer sure to get all the bad Western and Italian accents and hind-end-of-the-horse humor your lily-livered sides can take. The date is **Monday, May 4**. We'll be pony-expressing you an invite in April. Organize a posse and start polishin' your spurs now! SB





THE "SET UP THE JOKE" CONTEST WINNERS

by Jane Doe, Project Spokes-deer

This year's annual fund-raiser and wit-war proved harder than those of us who dreamed it up ever dreamed. Degree of difficulty notwithstanding, our fearless, triple-lutzng donors sent in vast numbers of clever joke set-ups to match our challenging punch lines along with plenty of booty to match the **Department of Culture Affairs** challenge grant. All in all, we received more than \$28,000 dollars, and that's no joke.

The judges were ruthless (especially the Eastern European bloc) and a couple of entrants were automatically relegated to Honorary Mention status for being on the board or being married to **Willie**. And now, the winners:

RIB-TICKLER

Flavia and Ed Grimm

Punchline: To gain himself a steam.

Set Up: Why did the egotist go to the Turkish baths?

KNEE-SLAPPER

Judy Goldman and Michael Pillinger

Punchline: No.

Set Up: Knock-knock. Who's there? Yoko-O.
Yoko-O who?

SIDE-SPLITTER

Andy Millon

Punchline: Two for a quarter.

Set Up: How much are those dimes?

BEVERAGE-THROUGH-THE-NOSE

Susan Black

Susan's entry came on one of those itty-bitty post-it notes with the following written in itty-bitty writing:

Punchline: Because she was cranky
NO JOKE

OVERALL WINNERS

Daniel Jenkins and Kathy Hiler

Danny and Kathy will exchange *bon mots* and witty repartee at **Union Pacific** while enjoying dinner for two. (A fitting prize. They sent in no less than **three** limericks, displaying a real need to get out of the house more often.)

Punchline: There goes the NEA grant!

Set Up: When a young one had started to rant
About using words in a play that he can't
Like "ca-ca" and "poo-poo"
They said that simply won't do-do 'cause...

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Ruth Cohen

If you don't get this one, call **George** and have him do it in his best Brooklyn bouncer voice. The voice alone is worth the call.

Punchline: A used toupee.

Set Up: What did the Brooklyn bouncer say to the party-crashing couple?

Jenny Gersten

Jenny enjoys far too much leverage to win, but we liked her joke.

Punchline: Medium rare.

Set Up: What do you call an undercooked psychic?

CYNICAL, JADED AND SNIDE

Not real jokes, but all the same, we love these guys!

Jordan Corngold

Punchline: A royal flush.

Set Up: What does it take to get a good meal around the kingdom? (Laugh! I'm giving you money.)

Richard Dresser

"Contact my agent and we'll talk."

BOCK TO CITY: "ONE MORE SUBLET AND I'M OUTTA HERE!!!"

Sally Bock, Project Development Director and Smart Partner extraordinaire, is looking for one last sublet before she goes. That's the bad news. The *worse* news is that she's going in the first place. The Project is now looking for a good development director willing to work cheap, which is about as hard to find as a rent-stabilized two-bedroom with lots of light for under \$1000. See your next P.U. for a long and sappy farewell tribute. WR

IT'S OFFICIAL!!!! BOYLAN'S IS OFFICIAL SOFT DRINK OF THE PROJECT!

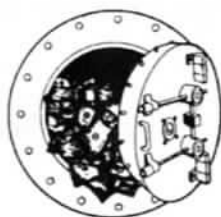
Pepsi Shmepsi! For those of you who like a cool refreshing beverage now and then, (and who doesn't?) look no further than **Boylan's Bottlenworks** for the best darn soda you ever sipped through a straw. Project Pal and Boylan's Bigwig **Ron Fiorina** has been supplying free soda for our study-weary Smart Partners to reach for during their richly deserved breaks. We can think of no better way to retreat from the rigors of academe than with a cool refreshing Boylan's Soda, now in many new flavors. They use only the highest quality bubbles. Try one and you'll see why Boylan's is The New Official Soft Drink of the 52nd Street Project. WR

WE'VE GOT A WEB SITE



No self-respecting vertebrate would be caught without a web site these days, and we've finally caught up with the times. Drop by www.52project.org and see the wonders **Lorraine Tobias** has wrought in our own little plot of cyberspace. Graphics, links, the works!

SenseNet is generously donating server space at the moment, but they can't do it forever. We're looking for someone who can permanently host our site. If you're an ISP with a big disk, call George at the clubhouse. GB



Sally's Funding Update

The following foundations and corporations recently made generous grants to the Project:

Cubic B's	\$1,000
Dramatists Guild Fund	\$2,500
Dramatists Play Services	\$1,500
Jean & Louis Dreyfus Foundation	\$10,000
Hennessey Foundation	\$5,000
J.P. Morgan & Co. Incorporated	\$15,000
Rita & Stanley Kaplan Foundation	\$5,000
Ann M. Martin Foundation	\$12,500
Morgan Stanley	\$7,500
New World Foundation	\$5,000
Newman's Own	\$5,000
O'Grady Foundation	\$5,000
Scherman Foundation	\$10,000
Jules and Doris Stein Foundation	\$11,250
Technicolor	\$5,000
United Talent Agency	\$10,000

We are grateful to these organizations for their support as well as to the many individuals who help sustain the Project's programs year-round.

WHERE'S JERRY MCGILL, ANYWAY?

A few years ago our city suffered a great loss when ex-Project staff member/all-star **Mr. Jerry McGill** moved to Eugene, Oregon. Jerry recently came to town for a reading of his screenplay *Breathe and Let Go*, which was sponsored by the **Sundance Film Festival**. We caught up with "Wheels" McGill to see how life was treating him.

PU: What do you miss most about life in NY?

Jerry: Well. I miss the theater a lot. Also the energy of New York. Most of all I miss all those lovely strangers you meet in laundromats.

PU: What do you miss most about The Project?

Jerry: I miss hanging out with the kids and working with all the creative people. Mostly I miss getting carried up the steps at EST when the elevator breaks.

PU: What do you miss *least* about The Project?

Jerry: Snowstorms.

PU: What are you up to?

Jerry: I'm perfecting the art of being a layabout. I think it's going very well. I spend a lot of time eating broccoli and listening to ABBA. I intend to write a book about it.

PU: But if you wrote a book about it, then you wouldn't really be a layabout.

Jerry: Oh man, that throws my whole agenda off. What am I gonna do? Maybe 60 minutes will do a story about layabouts. Now I can't write, thanks a lot.

PU: When not perfecting the art of being a layabout, what do you do?

Jerry: I'm a youth advocate at a center for homeless kids. I hang out with the kids, make them lunch, offer some counseling. Basically I talk with them about their lives and help them reach their goals. I've also done some freelance writing for the **Eugene Weekly**, a pinko liberal commie rag.

PU: Jerry, are you seeing anyone special?

Jerry: Yes I am, every time I look in the mirror.

PU: Do you have any advice for the kids?

Jerry: Eat broccoli. I'm obsessed with broccoli, you know it fights cancer. My advice is: Eat broccoli and finish school (in that order).

That about sums it up. Jerry has had a few calls from some studio bigwig-types about his screenplay. Hopefully we're all gonna hear more from the Broccoli Man real soon. Until then, here's to the busiest, coolest layabout ever!

MB



Jerry and Michael Bernard



Education Director Julie Feldman

FELDMAN BRAIN TRUSTED TO HEAD BRAIN TRUST

People with all brands of brains applied to skipper the Smart Partner program and the cream rose to the top in the form of **Julie Feldman**. Julie is an indefatigable educator who has done enough mentoring to mentor the mentors. In order to illustrate the concept of rounding a number to the nearest ten she offered this paradigm: "Pretend that you live on 40th street and your school is on 50th street and that on your way to school you realize that you need to use the bathroom really badly. Which bathroom do you head for if you're on 44th? 49th? 42nd?" and so on. The example worked perfectly except in the case of **Noel Polanco**, who has access to the bathroom in a Chinese Restaurant on 45th.

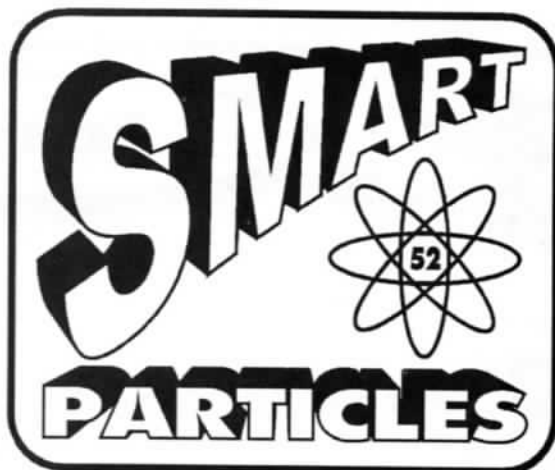
For the inside skinny on Smart Partners, read Julie's new column, **Smart Particles**, (below) which we expect to appear in P.U. with some regularity.

WR

When I was asked to direct the **Smart Partners Program**, I had no idea how smart they all were! They've figured out that the Project is the place for adults and kids to combine talents and get school work done. Not only that, at every meeting they get to drink a **Boylan's** soda (See p. 4). Each team has set individual goals and meets weekly for 90 minutes throughout the school year.

Brief snapshots of Smart Partner meetings reveal: **Mayleen Cancel** and **Katherine Lumb** exploring the joys of grammar through Mad-libs; **Noel Polanco** and **Catherine Brophy** experimenting with chemical energy (on the computer, thankfully); **Thomas Santoni** and **Andy Millon** researching a report about AIDS; **Judy Agosto** and **Nancy Giles** setting up organizing systems; **Gus Rogerson** cheering on **Luis Anthony Maldonado** as he makes it to the 6th of the 7 Narnia Chronicles; **Lorraine Zambrano** and **Paola Fantini** co-writing weekly installments about their heartthrobs, the Backstreet Boys; **Janice Santiago** and **Lisa Benavides** surfing the internet; and **Jaya Rosado** and **Sally Bock** - multiplying, multiplying, multiplying.

Raymond Ocasio coined the new word "shnocks!" when **Stephen Haff** cruised ahead of him in dictionary races; **Peggy Adler** beamed with pride when **Mary Vamvoukakis** got accepted into every high school she applied to; **Hakim Latimore**, a.k.a. the Wizard of Poetry, created his first poem book with **Robin Morse**; **Jayne Rosado** framed a few shots for the television cameraman at a taping of *The Wubbulous World of Dr. Seuss*, where his S.P. **Adam Felber** works; **Isha Rodriguez** (with **Diana**



By Julie Feldman

Son) wrote the history of the number 18 ("single digits 1 and 8 got married"); **Jaysunn Rosado** (with **Jose Dominguez**) insightfully noted, "Romeo and Juliet is a classic because people still like romance" and, as this goes to press, **Eris Migliorini** and **Vionel Ortiz** are about to begin their Smart Partner adventure.

But all of you interested in participating should be forewarned: Smart Partnering is not for the weary. **Tanika Parson**, well into the middle of her second year with

volunteer **Alison Tatlock**, reports their work is getting "quite serious." She remarked, "I like that...a little bit." And when **Anne Garcia Romero** asked **Gloria Trejo** if she'd like a copy of the Pablo Neruda poem they've been reading, Gloria said, "Thanks, but I'm all poemed out."

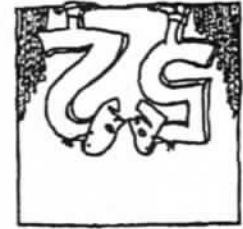
The Project's after-school homework help program is also going strong. On any given day, one can find regulars **Noel Polanco**, **Johnathan Roldan** and **Justin Aparte** (and others not-so-regular) aided by volunteers **Derrick Widmark**, **Jack Gwaltney**, **Anne O'Sullivan** and anyone else the kids can rope into helping with geography, writing stories, playing computer Scrabble and conducting science experiments. (If anyone has any idea why our two avocado pits have not sprouted, we'd appreciate the tip). **Beth Wojtusik** has signed on as the "personal trainer" for reading and **Marybeth Bentwood** *está conversando con Luis Anthony Maldonado*. They invite other interested kids to join their Spanish conversation hour.

Any other adults who want to help out with homework, contact Julie at the Project: (212)333-5252. And thanks, everyone, for the warm welcome!



Jaya Rosado and Zsuzsa Mysak
in the Two-on-Twos

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HENRY KRIEGER

Occupation: Theatrical Composer
Place of Birth: Lenox Hill Hospital
Most Recent Accomplishment: Lived through the last six weeks
Credo: "Try to be good."
Last Book Read: *Caesar's Women* by Colleen McCullough
Favorite Project Memory: Meeting Robert Joy
Advice to the Kids: "Keep your chin up and tell the truth."
On Flyer Bars: "It's the thinking man's sweet."



Don't wait for a Project show to get a Flyer Bar! We always run out, anyway. Call 1-800-CANDYBAR.

Chair Emeritus Wendy Ettinger and Hubby Derek McLane announced the birth of Hudson McLane giving Cooper a partner with whom to pursue victory on the doubles court. Meanwhile, Project volunteers Michael Ritchie and Kate Burton announced the birth of Charlotte Ritchie, who is likely to be pursued by the McLane boys at some point in the future.



In the perma-bond marital glue department Ceci Arana and Kevin Grant are now officially bonded and Max Mayer and Katherine Corpeny announced their own sticky intentions for the spring. Paul McCrane has found himself a gem in jewelry designer Dana Kellin and sealed the deal with an engagement ring. Robert Shaffron and John Steber celebrated their tenth year in the state of bliss in their new home in Weehawken, New Jersey (which is now known as the Garden State of Bliss).



WR