

Slope Filmmakers Have a Festival Hit



By Joe Maniscalco

Stickball bats and Spaldeens. Going sewer to sewer, and looking out for cars coming down the block.

For generations of youngsters growing up in Brooklyn, these are indelible memories of spring and summer.

Two young filmmakers from Park Slope have captured these quintessential Brooklyn moments in a new faux-documentary called *When Broomsticks Where King*.

Made for the princely sum of \$300, the movie was

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Why Your Child's Education Is a Crap Shoot

By Gary Buiso

The fact that some schools excel and others fail is not a matter of funding, better teachers, or the latest technology. It's simply a matter of chance.

That fatalistic news is according to School Board 15 member Gary Popkin, a professor in the Computer Systems Technology department at New York City Technical College.

At the board's August 29 meeting, Popkin, who holds a Ph.D. in Operations Research from Polytechnic University, presented the findings of an independent analysis he conducted on schools in the brownstone district as well as across the city.

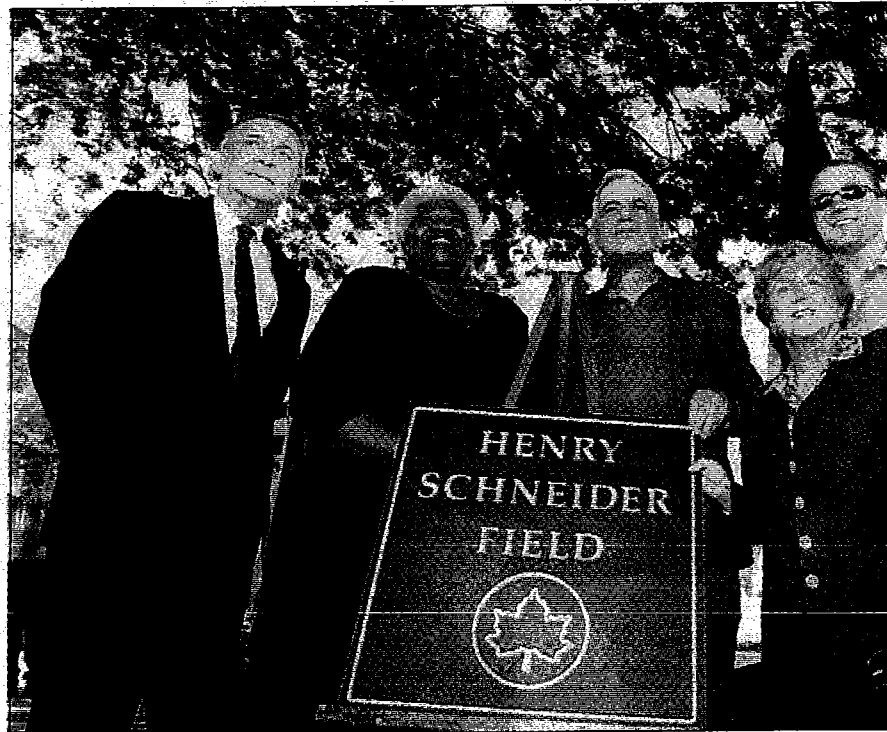
If a reliable method exists for improving student performance, Popkin hypothesized, then more than 50 percent of schools would show improvement from one year to the next. However, if chance is involved, and no reliable method exists, then about 50 percent of students would show improvement, and about 50 percent would worsen, he observed.

Looking at Board of Education data of student performance on the state's 2000-2001 English Language Arts Exam, Popkin determined that of the 666 schools listed citywide, 366 improved on the exam, moving from Level 1, the lowest possible score, to Level 2, a

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Parade Grounds March Out of Decay

From left, Borough President Golden's special assistant Parks Commissioner architect Christian Zimmermann dedicate the field in honor of



By Gary Buiso

Ground was broken Thursday for Phase II of the restoration of the Parade Grounds, a well-used 40-acre park whose reputation was once one of neglect and decay.

Originally designed in 1868 by the creators of Prospect Park, it once functioned as a location for military drills and parades. Lately though, the Parade Grounds was known for poorly lit, neglected fields littered with broken bottles and prone to flooding.

Soon it will boast top of the line athletic fields and facilities.

The groundbreaking, attended by elected officials, Parks Department Commissioner Henry Stern, community groups and members of the Prospect Park Alliance, represents the nearing of the end of the planned rehabilitation, whose planning began in 1996.

Phase II of the project will see the construction of two new baseball fields, one a "premier field" complete with grass turf, scoreboard, dugout and foul pole and lighting for night games, the other a "multi-use" field, with artificial turf, bullpens and homerun track. Also included is

the construction of a new goal posts and fences.

Phase II, which will cost \$10 million, is expected to be complete next year.

Phase III of the project, the completion of the second phase of seven fields for soccer, basketball, tennis, volleyball and softball.

Phase I of the plan, which includes the renovation of a top notch football field, is under way on the east side of the park, which is bounded by Avenue C, Parkside Avenue, and Avenue D.

The entire \$15 million project is expected to be complete in 2004.

The master plan, which includes the renovation of the Alliance Office of Capital Construction, is expected to receive a \$100,000 boost from the Na-

Funding for the construction of the outgoing Borough President's office is set aside \$10.3 million taxpayer

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one word comment by the editors of the Miami Herald, Florida's leading newspaper, and a left wing one at that, "NONSENSE."

But, then again, the Liberals of the deep south may just have a point, that point being, a voter has every right to be

boyfriend's moaner. She admits to taking the money and says she needed it to pay to make her a size "D". Purely by coincidence she is now being charged with a felony...class "D".

Ladies, is it really worth it? Most men ogle but when it

ed a patch for the sewing machine. Oh gang, what is the name of the man who received the patent? No. It isn't Singer. The man's name is Elias Howe and if you got that right you can take what's behind door number two or come back next week for...never mind. Have a great day.

Do-It-Yourself Filmmakers Score With Stickball

Continued from cover

shot right on 10th and 5th streets in just three weeks. No sooner had Jason Cusato and partner Ricardo Pantoja finished editing the 30-minute film when it was accepted to not one, but two prestigious film festivals.

Broomsticks will be shown at Madison Square Garden as part of the New York International Independent Film and Video Festival running now through September 17. Later in the fall, the boys from Brooklyn will travel to the West Coast for a showing of their documentary at the Angel City Film Festival in San Francisco, October 22 to 30.

"We were shocked," said Cusato. "San Francisco came first. New York came back the next day."

The Angel City Film Festival actually accepted two of Cusato and Pantoja's submissions. In addition to *Broomsticks*, the festival also accepted an earlier collaboration between the young Brooklyn filmmakers, both 26, called *The Out of Work Mime*.

The collaboration between Cusato and Pantoja goes all the way back to elementary school at St. Thomas Aquinas.

And, in fact, the entire project was made possible with the help of friends and family. Both Cusato's father and uncle appear in the film as old-time stickball champs.

But directing their own gang of friends proved to be the toughest thing about shooting *Broomsticks* - at least at the outset.

The filmmakers actually goofed and let a few guys show up on the set with earrings - a definite no-no for characters who were supposed to be playing the neighborhood game 20 and 30 years ago. It was something the older guys working on the film were quick to jump on: "If they were playing ball in our day, they wouldn't be wearin' frigin' earrings."

To shoot scenes that depicted the reminiscences of the old stickball players, Cusato and Pantoja deftly shot in grainy, 8 mm film and later transferred it to a digital format.

"Shooting around cars was very tough," said Cusato.

The duo estimates that they spent approximately \$20,000 on camera equipment over a two-year period - all with the sole inten-

tion of making their own films. Both draw inspiration from successful do-it-yourself filmmakers like Kevin Smith of *Clerks* fame.

Broomsticks was entirely edited on the duo's iMac.

By the end of shooting, Cusato found that actors that were once hard to pin down were now coming out of the woodwork and even asking to do a sequel.

Although the filmmakers originally envisioned *Broomsticks* as a spoof, both Cusato and Pantoja were moved at how authentic the actors' stickball memories really became.

"The guys spoke from the heart," Cusato says.

By the end of shooting, Cusato found that actors that were once hard to pin down were now coming out of the woodwork and even asking to do a sequel.



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