

# Amaryllis



Summer, 2022

*Amaryllis, a newsletter for the Chelsea community, was conceived, and has been researched and written by Jane Hogg since 1996.*



## VICKIE KIM

**G**rowing up in Vilnius, Lithuania, Victoria Kim was well educated. She's fluent in Lithuanian, Russian, and French. Slender and graceful for sure. She was trained by the Kirov Ballet for eight years.

Almost 40 years ago, Vickie and her parents arrived in this country as political refugees. Years of snail mail had kept them in touch with relatives in Illinois, so they moved into a small apartment in Chicago. While her multi-lingual mother, who'd taught for years, organized her papers to be able to seek employment, Vickie worked for local dance productions.

A few years later, realizing Vickie wanted to pursue university studies, the family moved to the Bronx. Vickie enrolled at nearby Fordham University, where, during her junior year, she was given the opportunity to spend a semester studying abroad. She chose Paris, where the options were endless.

After graduating from Fordham, she returned to France and enrolled at the Sorbonne, earning a graduate degree in Philosophy. Her language ability made it possible for her to cover daily living expenses by interpreting and translating.

Years in France were behind her when she returned to Chelsea. Her first job back home was as an interpreter for the New York State Courts. Soon after, she was hired by the Department of Homeland Security, where, decades later, she remains employed.





All this while living in the city surrounded by the arts that continues to excite her. Viewing or doing; New York City Ballet. Metropolitan Opera, Philharmonic—dozens of museums too. She visits them all.

Vacations are still another dream come true. When I asked where she liked to travel, Vickie explained that so far, she’s visited more than 50 countries throughout the world on all continents (except Australia). She laughs, saying, “But I have been to Antarctica.”

How about here in America? I hope it’s more than New York.

“Way more. I’ve visited 40 of them and gone to 25 National Parks so far.”

Just listening, I was feeling world-weary. “Is there one trip that’s most memorable?” I asked.


“Since I travel so often, my Mother rarely chooses to go with me. She says it’s simpler just to remain at home where she’s able to spend her days doing whatever pleases her and not being locked into a specific timetable. But this time, she decided to come along.

“The Trans-Siberian railroad was built long ago, is well-constructed and constantly maintained, begins in Moscow and ends 5,778 miles away in Vladivostok. Many different trains run along this railway. We bought a first-class ticket, so we had our own cabin.

“I hadn’t seen Russia for almost 35 years. Now we could see it, *really just see it*, and do it together. Our curtained window wall looked directly outside. When open, we saw miles and miles of countryside, occasionally a connecting bridge and, way off in the background, perhaps a small city stretching out to its suburbs.

“It had twin beds separated by a drop-leaf table. Overhead was a television screen showing Russian movies and documentaries.

“Meals were served in a spacious dining car, open from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm. When we chose to dine in our cabin, we asked our car attendant to have it delivered directly to our room.

“Was it a memorable trip? Nothing could be more memorable than that... most memorable for both of us.” 





## WALKING AROUND 23RD

Something happening in front of Consulado General de Honduras on 23rd. I can see a red tee-shirted woman sort of dancing around but yelling something in a hand-held mic. People crowded around listening, with a few others sitting on metal frames guarding trees curbside (they are eating something on paper plates—later learn it’s tamales). Someone else is passing out food and/or cans of soda.

Walked over and bent down to talk to a man who’s eating. He explains that, before Consulado opens at 9:00 am, there’s a long line of people waiting to enter to get their passports. About 15 are allowed inside at a time. When that group is finished, the next group enters.

Now about 10:30 am, and to make life easier, someone has come by with cases of cold drinks, paper plates, napkins, and tamales. They’re passing them out to those still waiting because it’s sunny and getting hotter.

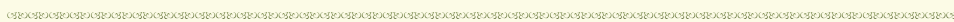
When I come along, the line is almost finished. Man sitting down, finishing his tamale, explains what they’re doing and why. Offers me some of his tamales.

I smile, saying, “No thanks.” It was nice of him to explain the commotion to me, and with that, I continued walking to the nearby supermarket.

Entering Trader Joe’s, comfortably cooler inside.

First thing I notice in the salad/vegetable area against the side wall is that babies are a big thing now. Uncooked veggies out in the open... baby zucchini for \$2.69 and baby corn-on-cob for \$2.29. Plastic bagged baby spinach is just above baby arugula.

Nearby, nicely boxed, are baby beets label, peeled, steamed, and ready to eat (label said to be served hot or cold, and nice in salads). ☺



## POSTCARDS OF POLITICS

Today’s mail brings one for the “drop in here for recycling” bin. Big and bold-face: “Tony Simone,” then small and not bold at all... “Democrat for Assembly.” The rest of the 9x6 card provides (for want of a better description) a drop-down menu of six district leaders who support him. Well, at least such mail keeps the post office in business. ☺



## ART STUDENTS GUILD

Seen them twice. First time, stretched out around SE corner 25th and 8th in front of the shop selling pharmaceutical-related items. Next time, under the canopy fronting empty space previously occupied by Chelsea Apothecary.

Half a dozen artists working on small paintings. Their canvases, along with a variety of brushes, water, and paint trays necessary for their present project, positioned on collapsible easels.

Who are they? Where did they come from? Between brush strokes, one art student explained this was their final project due at the end of July when their Art Students League water-color class ended.



## ART GALLERIES

Roaming the streets of west Chelsea, especially since it's become an art gallery hideaway, is an easy place to view who's new to the neighborhood.

At 226 West 26th Street, more than 200 artists have assembled to welcome viewers. Studios, of course, vary in size. Some are small, others large. What intrigued me was one in a fortified elevator shaft. I kid you not!



## WALKING ABOUT...

### Summer at Nathan's, July 3rd

Yearly mass hot dog eating contest at Nathan's Famous on Coney Island... Same day affair at Holy Apostle Soup Kitchen. What did they serve? Neatly packed in a snap-tight cardboard container... flame-roasted corn placed next to seasoned macaroni salad... neatly positioned so it doesn't dampen the hot dog in its bun. And as the guest departed, receiving a mini ice cream sundae in a plastic cup... bottom had a crisp cookie... next came balls of multi-flavored ice cream... all topped with a cherry.

As good as it gets! Happy 4th of July, which happened the next day.





## HEARING AIDS

Summer... sunny days... birds chirping, others cooing. Good time to have your hearing tested. Used to be a green awning on 14th Street just west of 8th. Medical Arts Building—sounds familiar.

Inside, the wall directory says “Audio Help, 2nd floor.” Remembering when I went there a few years ago, I took the elevator up and asked the receptionist if they could check my hearing.

“Not today. We’ll be closing soon. But I can make an appointment for you.”

Endless options. Preferred day? Early? Mid-day? Late afternoon? All set. Appointment card in hand; I’m to be there next Tuesday after lunch to have the audiologist perform the test.

Clearly, a well-run office. They have computerized files available on former patients. If they’ve ever made hearing aids for someone, they can see when made, what kind, etc. If it was only hearing tests, they can pull up those audiograms to compare them to present test.

Obviously, hearing aids would be helpful for me. Traditional ones, those with a wire going behind the ears don’t work in our pandemic world. The wires get tangled up with masks. Can’t skip the mask, so many people have been just giving up on the aids.

Dr. Bravo, an audiologist and owner of all AudioHelp branches, explains the new technology. Only available at the 14th Street facility on Fridays; I have a 1:30 pm appointment with him in a week. Curious but skeptical. New? How new? New in what way?

“Hah! No behind-the-ear wires. Fits completely inside the ear.”

“Would it fit in mine?”

Smiling, he puts one in my right ear and another in my left. Hands me a mirror so I can see how they look. In all fairness, I don’t really see them; just feel something in my ears.

More than curious, I’m seduced and willing to try it. Now we’re dealing with facts.

“How much? What if you make them, and after a few weeks, I decide they’re too much of a daily hassle?” I ask.



In New York State, hearing aids can be returned within 45 days of purchase.





“Give them back to me, and I’ll return your money,” he replied.

I’d be a fool not to try them.

Making ones specifically for me is a lengthy process. Both ears are not identical; temporary ear molds are made to guarantee comfort; audiograms need to be correctly interspersed. Once all arrangements are understood and agreed upon, a contract is drawn up, signed, and a 50% deposit is paid.

Two weeks waiting... dangling in thin air, so I try not to think about it. Finally, the day arrived.

With my new hearing aids properly installed, Dr. Bravo explains, “Don’t look at me. Just listen to me. Turn your head and listen. Turn halfway around and listen some more. How do I sound?”

My smile is answer enough.

“Now, and just bear with me, I’m going to take them out and put them in three more times. I’ve shown you how to put new batteries in, how to take them out at night, and open the battery door until you use them again. The receptionist will give you a storage box, several discs of batteries, and schedule an appointment with Dr. Rufina Yakubov, an audiologist who runs the 14th Street branch. She’s here every day but Monday. She’ll work with you until you’re comfortable changing batteries and inserting the devices.”

Three weeks later, I was having my doubts. I’d promised myself I’d put them on every morning after coffee, keep them on at least until I was ready to eat dinner at night, and it was still a drag. Easy to insert the left hearing aid, but the right was often a hassle. Arranged to see Dr. Bravo for a refund.

“Guess they’re not for me. Run out of new technology?” No smile from me this time—just a shoulder shrug.

“Not quite. One more option remains. Cost a bit more. Inside the ear, but only I can insert them using a special device to place and remove them. These stay in place for ten weeks.”

I’ve told myself cost doesn’t matter because I can’t take money with me once I go. Taking a deep breath, “I’ll try it.”

Two weeks later, it’s the big day. Make myself a healthy sliced chicken sandwich, wash it down with cool Crystal Light Lemonade, check my pockets to make sure I have my credit card, keys in my pocket, mask on my face... I take the elevator to the lobby, and I’m out the front door.





It's an easy walk, straight down 8th Avenue. No need to rush. Know never to cross until the corner light shows the white-bulbed figure. Eleven blocks... cross to the south side of 14th. Just a few doors away, and I'm early.

The receptionist greets me, and seconds later, Dr. Bravo appears to usher me into his office.

Positions my chair, makes sure I'm comfortable. His desk is all cleared, with just two tiny, bright yellow objects on a white sheet. Then he opens his cabinet... takes out a unique metal device... picks up one small thing and inserts it in my right ear. "Feel okay?"

I nod "Yes." Then the other ear. Same question. Same nod.

He goes back and sits on his side of the desk. Smiling, he asks if I can hear him.

I'm laughing up a storm. "Of course I can hear you. I'm not deaf."


Ready to work with his next patient, he suggests I go back to the waiting area, sit for a while to see how I feel about keeping them. Do that. Go to the restroom, wash and dry my hands so I can listen to running water and paper towels crinkling.

A patient later, Dr. Bravo suggests I might like to go downstairs and walk on the sidewalk. Listen to the sounds of cars and buses and people talking.

Knowing he'll be in the office until 5:00, I decide to do a few different things. Shop at nearby CVS. Wander a bit. Get a cool latte and drink it at their outside table. Cross the avenue and wait at a bus stop. Pay attention to how it feels being so close to moving cars and zooming motorcycles. Enter a small shop to look at items, talk to the clerk, ask about prices, and eventually leave. Listen to the click of the closing door.

Call me a happy camper. Return to the office and scheduled my next appointment with Dr. Bravo for September 23rd at 11:30 am.

Head back home, slowly this time, window shopping, listening to loads of different street sounds, people talking, kids laughing, dogs barking, overhearing conversations.

First thing I do when I enter my apartment is call Dr. Bravo's office and ask the receptionist to give him a message. "Tell him I said, 'bravo!' I'll see him in late September." 





## BURLINGTON PROFIT

**B**urlington... busy and right here in Chelsea. Brim filled with everything imaginable. Open from 8:00 am until 10:00 pm, no wonder one sees overflowing shopping carts.

My own cart had a dozen bath towels, several unusual structures designed to hold at least six coffee mugs (each able to fit into overhead cabinets), varying sizes of snap lock plastic containers, four standard-sized pillows, several sets of linens for full-size and twin-size mattresses, and finally, a dozen double-decker cutlery trays designed to organize kitchen drawers.

Summertime. Sensible season to be orderly.

Payment is only on the street level. My choice? Elevator rather than stairs or escalator. The check-out line snakes its way through narrow, shoulder-high aisles, both sides of which are stocked with a variety of items (many edible), so it's easy to add a few.

Finally! I arrive at the cashier. She empties everything from my cart and puts it on her counter. "Do you want a bag?"

Credit card in hand, I'm puzzled. "How else would I get all this home?"

She explains customers are expected to bring their own bags.

I was coming from Trader Joe's where I'd already bought 2 loaves of bread, 2 packs of toilet paper, and 4 packs of dinner napkins, all in a TJ's collapsible bag. All the other things I had found while wandering through Burlington.

In that case, she suggested their thin paper bags would be sufficient.

Fine with me. My question, "No cost, I assume?"

"No, five cents each."

Annoyed, I pocketed my credit card and said, "Forget it, just re-stock it all." Burlington's balance scale seems a bit out of whack! ☹️







# CHELSEA NEWS

A weekly freebie newspaper... familiar name... not exactly, but the two-word masthead in the upper left made me wonder.

Hold my breath... hope it's like the long ago *Now Chelsea*... picked it up and started to read.

Nice layout. The front page story speaks to me because it echoes what *Morning Edition* radio news had been talking about this week.

Slowly, glancing at each page... intriguing headlines, some with eye-catching pictures... not exactly all Chelsea but surely relevant.

Page 4—A full-page cartoon by someone named Marc Bilgrey. I laugh. Is he talking about 23rd street crosstown?

Calendar *NYC NOW* begins on page eight... Wednesday, July 13th, it's just about us. Creative breaks around an *Art Cart*. Every Wednesday through Sunday at Little Island on West 13th Street.

*City Arts* on page ten talks about the art at Penn Station, and on the facing page is something about Annie Leibovitz appearing at SVA Theatre on West 23rd. (I saw that long line of people and had wondered what was happening.)

Don't miss it! Pick up *Chelsea News*. The following week had me hooked. This local paper for Chelsea is a winner! Front page had Erik Bottcher talking about Mental Health. Another full-page cartoon. Hmmm. Was that couple sitting on the rooftop of my building?

*Why I Love the Subway*, page six. Then *Calendar Now* on page eight invited Chelsea-ites to show off their moves on the outdoor Plaza at The Shed at 545 West 30th. Wednesday, July 20th, the Little Island Music and Dance Festival began a ten-day run.

A full page of puzzles. Hope that too turns out to be a regular. Restaurant Inspection Ratings for those in zip codes 10001 & 10011... Both weeks all received A ratings.

Definitely, a paper to read. Welcome to our neighborhood! ☺☺





## FOND OF FEDEX

Accustomed to sending or returning packages with bar coded labels, I was used to stopping by both their 8th and 7th Avenue locations.

Last week, since I simply wanted a copy of my Covid records, and 8th Avenue was more convenient. \$1.25 was easy enough. Thought I'd get two copies; maybe even three would be a good idea—\$3.75 then. That's when I learned after the first copy that additional copies were only a quarter.

Actually, I had two Covid cards. My original vaccinations were documented on the original card, and the booster was on another, so I thought I'd just staple them together. The clerk, Tanvir Amin, suggested he could lay them out so they were side by side on the same sheet.


Once he showed me what that would look like, he suggested one sheet might be easier with the first card on the front and the second one on the back. All these were just suggestions.

His time, his expertise—things that would never have occurred to me. Since I liked his suggestion so much, I asked him print three copies. All done for less than \$2.

Ready to leave, I wondered if there was some way to have a permanent one. That's when I learned about laminating.

Again, not expensive, just time-consuming. It means plugging in a machine, and while it's warming up, sandwiching the card between two sheets of cloudy, flimsy stuff made just for laminating, cutting the cards to size, and resealing them.

Took an hour of Tanvir's time. Total amount paid by my credit card: \$12.

His final suggestion: If I showed the laminated card to a care provider, ask them to copy it so my vaccine card is included in my permanent health records at that office. 





# TALKING ABOUT TENT OVER UMBRELLA

Big... happened here NE corner on 26th & 8th

Floor to ceiling, which at street level means close to 20 feet, seems to carry everything. Browsing is a must! Sure puts a smile on this fact-finder's face!

What do they sell? Everything from A to Z. For me, that included everything from applesauce to zippers.

Crushed red pepper at Trader Joe's in 1.2 ounce bottles is \$1.99. Here, a much larger 2 1/2 ounce bottle costs \$1.79.

Quick cook steel cut oats, 25 ounces, neatly boxed at Trader Joe's cost \$2.69. Here, just in plastic sacks, 16 ounces is \$2.49, and 32 ounces is \$6.49.

Storing bulk becomes doable because here, they have heavy-duty plastic screw top containers all the way up to Pyrex freezer containers that work for the oven with back snap locks.

Name brand black polyester leggings, company priced at \$48 here for \$9.99. Tired of removing pet hair from dark clothing? Pet Smart has lint rollers. So does the Tent. Check out the prices.

The fabric-wheeled shopping carts seen everywhere these days because they load easily onto buses intrigued me. At the Tent, they were \$15. Seen in three locations nearby, they cost more than double that amount. ☺



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## HORRIBLE HAPPENING

St. Columba on 25th Street is now shut.

### Church Closed Until Further Notice

Sometime, late at night on July 11th, the sanctuary's canopy collapsed, crushing everything beneath it as it headed to the floor. All sealed up now, numerous agencies are investigating asbestos and lead leakage while others attempt to determine reasons for the structural inadequacies. ☺



## JAPANESE RESTAURANTS

Summer seems to be a time to eat away from home. Restaurants are opening up everywhere.

Here in Chelsea, most of the new ones are Japanese. Checked out a few of them before I settled on this one.

### Maison Kintaro

On 24th Street, just west of 9th Avenue you'll see several silk fish floating high above a metal ramp. We wandered in.

*The Lunch Box* menu included Eggplant Unagi (one of my favorite vegetables), so I chose that. My companion ordered the Chicken Sandwich, curious to see how they handled sweet potato fries.

Delicious, describing both dishes, would be an understatement. Their chef does amazing things with familiar foods prepared in totally different ways.

Open Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 9:00 pm. *Lunch Box* items are available until 4:00, but selections from the dinner menu may be ordered at any hour. ☺



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## STREET VENDORS

Where are all the fruits and veggies coming from? My two for \$1 bunches of scallions from Mexico. A box of Kiwi from Colombia. Grapefruit from Argentina.

A few days later, a new batch of grapefruit from Costa Rica and yet another from Chili. Lychee from Colombia. And (the ones I didn't purchase), packaged hothouse-grown miniature cucumbers from the U.K. ☺

