

HELL'S KITCHEN

New Park for a Dead Man Named Bob

Bob Kennedy was part Irish, part Native American and part insomniac. He roamed the streets of Hell's Kitchen in a feathered headdress, with a Boa Constrictor around his neck and a squawking parrot on his shoulder.

By day, he tended his ferrets, his beloved plants and his grandmother who lived in his building at 454 W. 35th St.

By night, he would sit outside on his deck until sun-up.

It is said that Bob Kennedy found great delight in chasing away prostitutes who walked onto "Bob's block," by creeping up on them, dressed in his tribal colors and scaring them half to death.

Bob Kennedy has been dead for 14 years, but his name, and reputation, lives on.

This weekend marks the opening of Bob's Park, on West 35th Street between Dyer and 10th Avenue.

Two years ago, the park was an empty lot adjoining Bob Kennedy's old residence. There was nowhere for children to play, except at the local community center, two blocks away, the concrete jungle in front of the Jacobs Javits convention center, or a nearby parking lot.

With a loan from the non-profit Enterprise Foundation, the Clinton Housing Development Company and the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association

began revitalizing the empty lot as part of a plan to develop the adjacent building into a single-room occupancy residence for seniors.

"Bob's Park" was intended as a bonus to quell the usual grumbling that accompanies most social service projects. Residents rejoiced.

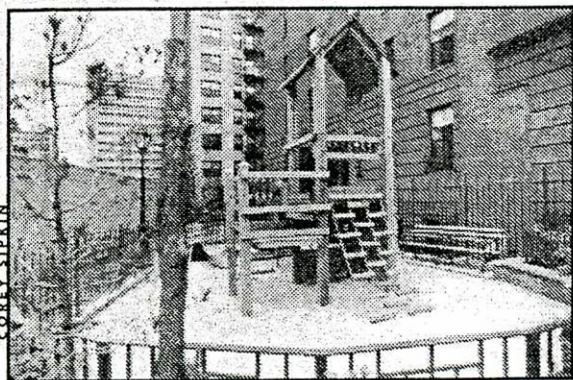
Sunday, Bob's Park will enjoy its official opening, with a gala extravaganza of tree planting, live music and food; much of it donated by West 35th Street merchants.

With the success of Bob's Park, the Clinton Housing Development Company and the Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Association are planning many more such projects, including planting trees and street cleaning in and around Hell's Kitchen, in conjunction with the two neighborhood police precincts and the Port Authority.

"This is not a residential neighborhood," said Michelle Rosenthal, an organizer for the development group. "We tend to go unnoticed, and then we get dumped on. We're really trying to be creative."

Bob would be proud.

— Anthony Richards



Sunday marks the opening of a new Hell's Kitchen park, named for a resident who died 14 years ago.