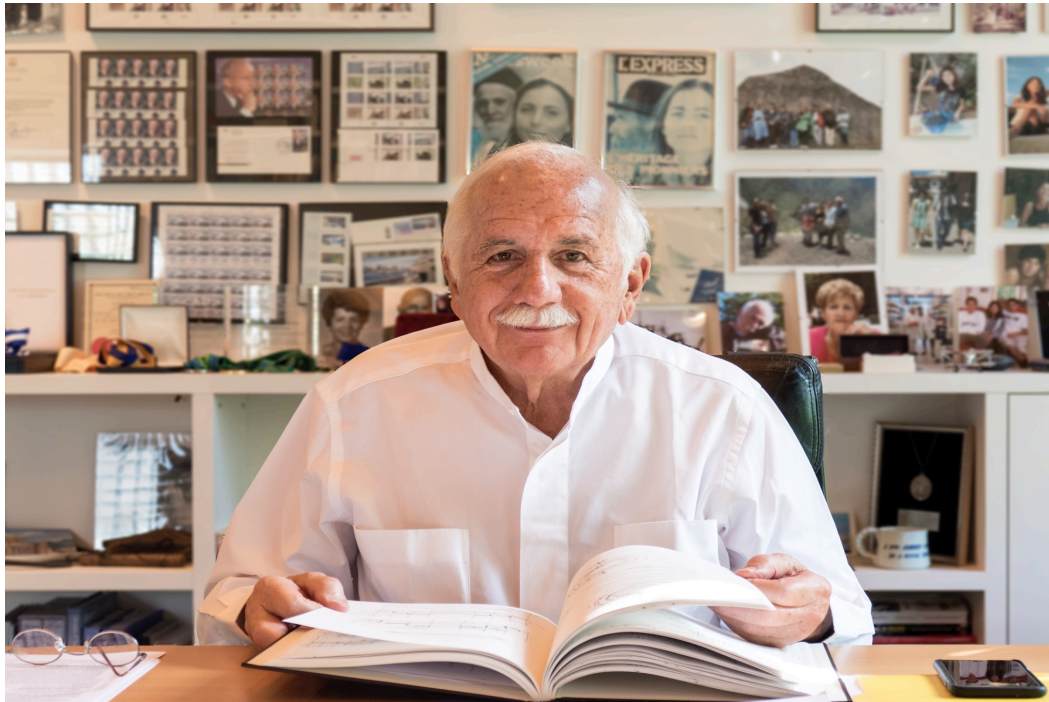


ECG MATTERS

Happy Birthday, Esplanade!

Moshe Safdie, Esplanade's Architect

Photo by: Michal Ronnen-Safdie



The Esplanade's 30th anniversary is this year. I had the good fortune to speak with the architect of our building, world-renowned Moshe Safdie, who was recently awarded the international Wolf Prize for a "career motivated by the social concerns of architecture." Over his celebrated 50-year career, Safdie has explored the essential principles of socially responsible design as an architect, urban planner, educator, theorist, and author.

A citizen of Israel, Canada, and the United States, Moshe Safdie graduated from McGill University. After apprenticing with Louis I. Kahn in Philadelphia, Safdie returned to Montréal to oversee the master plan for the 1967 World Exhibition. In 1964 he established his own firm to realize Habitat '67, an adaptation of his undergraduate thesis and a turning point in modern architecture. His offices are in Somerville and his projects are all over the world. Check out his magnificent works on the Safdie Architects' website:

<https://www.safdiearchitects.com/>

Spring 2019 Issue

Events:

5/9/19 Spring Potluck
6:30 pm, Tye Room)

6/11/19 BOT Meeting
6:30 pm, Tye Room

ECG Matters, published by the Esplanade Community Group (ECG), is devoted to building community in our building and our neighborhood, and welcomes feedback. Send to:

EsplanadeCommunity@gmail.com

All must be signed!

As he reminisced about his work on the Esplanade, he noted that our building is a direct descendant of the ground-breaking Habitat '67 with its stepping terraces, gardens, openness to the sun, and orientation to the river. In fact, the Esplanade was the first project that was built in the spirit of Habitat since 1967. But, Moshe noted, "there have been quite a few after that." And there certainly have been!

Arthur Cohen, the developer of The Cohen Companies, chose the Esplanade's site and contacted Moshe. They agreed that they had a unique site and needed to make the most of it with as many units with river views ("in the spirit of Habitat") as possible. But they were also dealing with the strict guidelines of Cambridge, limiting height, requiring brick construction, and a water table restricting below-ground parking. To deal with these limitations, they used brick "liberally on the city side" and cream precast concrete panels on the riverside. The lower ceilings in the units offered a way to stay within

Happy Birthday, Esplanade, cont.

the height constraints and get as many units as possible in the two towers that terraced toward the water. The design disguises the above-ground parking with housing units and a garden on the parking roof of the 4th level. From across the river, Moshe noted that the Esplanade looks like a “Greek island.”

Moshe was pleased to learn that through our Newsletter we are building community and was generous with his time for this interview. (He noted that Habitat '67 now also has a Newsletter and sent me a copy.) In the bustling urban setting of Kendall Square, the Esplanade continues to offer the peace and spirit of the river, light, air, and the natural world, creating beauty or “fit” with the setting. This feeling of “fit,” beauty, and truth is clearly reflected in his only published poem that he says “speaks for itself”*:

*He who seeks truth shall find beauty
He who seeks beauty shall find vanity
He who seeks order shall find gratification.
He who seeks gratification shall be disappointed
He who considers himself the servant of his fellow beings
shall find the joy of self expression
He who seeks self expression shall fall into the pit of
arrogance
Arrogance is incompatible with nature
Through nature, the nature of the universe and the
nature of man, we shall seek truth
If we seek truth we shall find beauty*

We have found beauty here in the Esplanade and we look forward to celebrating its 30th Anniversary in the Fall!
Thank you, Moshe Safdie.

--Jane Hilburt-Davis

*Quoted from his book *Moshe I* and his 2007 TED Talk.

ESPLANADE '89



HABITAT '67



Update on Esplanade's Interest Groups

Three book clubs meet at the Esplanade. These notes are from book club members who hope to spread the joys of reading.

The World According to Fannie Davis: My Mother's Life in the Detroit Numbers.

Bridgett Davis, novelist, screenwriter, and creative writing professor, tells the story of her remarkable mother in *The World According to Fannie Davis: My Mother's Life in the Detroit Numbers*. It's both a memoir and a social history of the significance of the underground numbers game in the African American community and Detroit's slide into decay. Through archival research and interviews with family and friends, the author details her life of comfort and advantages and her incredible mother who kept the family and the business together throughout turmoil and changes. She even found a way to succeed after Michigan established the state lottery in 1972 that the author refers to as "usurping." Fannie ran the business for 34 years and Bridgett discloses "the fact that mama gave us an unapologetically good life by taking others' bets on three-digit number is the secret I've carried with me." Now she tells her story and this reader is glad she did!

Jane Hilburt-Davis

Educated

Tara Westover writes an inspiring coming-of-age memoir. A remarkable young woman, Westover grew up in a survivalist Mormon family living off the grid in rural Idaho. Her dominating father scorned book-based education as well as traditional medicine and believed that the end of days was coming with the new millennium. Not only did she have to deal with her father, who probably suffered from undiagnosed bipolar disorder and constantly put her in harm's way, but she also had to come to terms with a physically abusive brother. Her determination and

intelligence make for fascinating reading as she struggles to break away from a family she loves but cannot live with.

Our members thought the book was an enjoyable, fascinating, and easy read but were troubled by the instances of abuse and wondered if her memories of events were wholly accurate. We were also left wondering how the author would move forward and what type of future lies in store for her, having written a best-selling first book but continuing to carry the deep scars of her childhood experiences.

Charles Glovsky

The Lowland

Esplanade Bookies met in January to discuss *The Lowland* by Jhumpa Lahiri. Many of us had previously read Lahiri's *The Namesake*, a story of an arranged Indian marriage which begins with the wife experiencing loneliness and cultural confusion in Cambridge after being transplanted from Calcutta for her husband's MIT studies. *The Lowland*, a darker tale, begins with a young Indian, Sublash, who moves from Calcutta to Providence RI for his PhD. A poignant and puzzling story unfolds when his radicalized brother becomes a martyr to the Marxist cause. Sublash marries his brother's widow and becomes father to his child. He becomes a single father when his wife, struggling to achieve her own independence, leaves them.

Our discussion of the book, over Indian snacks, considered what it revealed about mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons, social isolation, and romantic and brotherly love in both the United States and late 20th century India. It was also an opportunity to share knowledge about India from our reading and travels.

Janis Gogan

Behave

There is no shortage of advice for new mothers, and the Esplanade Book Group that met in February had

(Books Continued)

a lively discussion about parenting theories. *Behave*, a 2016 book by Andromeda Romano-Lax, is a historical fictional biography about the foundations of behavioral research. John B. Watson's best-selling 1928 baby book advised parents to maintain a strict and early schedule for toilet training, remain emotionally detached, and resist giving-in or "spoiling." However, *Behave* is primarily about Rosalie Raynor, Watson's second wife and lab assistant. She had a scandalous relationship with Watson before marrying him. She was conflicted by his research methods as well as by her own maternal instincts.

The book group watched an original film clip that showed Watson and Rayner at work in their lab, experimenting on Baby Albert. It generated an "ah hah" moment, as the members reflected on the experiments and the child-raising axioms held dear by their own parents and grandparents.

Jane Gould

News From Our Neighborhood: The Kendall Square Association, A Neighborhood Resource

The Kendall Square Association was founded nearly 10 years ago with the objective of connecting members to one another and tangibly growing collaborations. The goal of the Kendall Square Association (KSA) is to improve the innovation ecosystem through convening the community and offering vital programming. As an advocate for public policy, KSA pushes hard for changes that make all of our lives better, such as vital improvements to the MBTA so that all of us can move into, out of, and around Kendall Square more easily. KSA also assists members to develop best-in-class strategies for building truly diverse and inclusive organizations so Kendall Square is a place where people can learn, partner, innovate, and create. In carrying out its mission the KSA offers the following benefits to affiliate members.

- Website listing in the KSA Membership
- Events Calendar listings for Kendall Square-based events
- Twitter Promotion, Marketing, and Announcements
- Newsletter Announcements – our weekly @KendallNow e-newsletter reaches up to 10,000 people

KENDALL SQUARE ASSOCIATION
510 Kendall Street, Cambridge MA 02142
[\(617\) 547-5772](tel:6175475772) | info@kendallsq.org

Heather Hohenthal

Esplanade Arts Group

The Arts Group plans to meet the week of April 8th and brainstorm ideas for more interaction among members. As of now, we have been a "clearinghouse" for those who wish to link up with people at a specific venue. In the interest of building more community in this groups, we will discuss the possibility of a more formal structure, perhaps meeting bimonthly to address specific categories of interest, i.e., film, concerts, museums.

We welcome anyone who is interested and suggestions are appreciated.

Questions? Contact me, *Nancy Crowley*, at:
nancymcrowley@icloud.com

A Local Taste of Venice in the South End

Because our favorite dining experiences are often discovered by happenstance and then only shared discriminately to preserve the place as a well-kept secret, I offer a review with conflicted feelings. That said, what is better than walking into a favorite restaurant and seeing your neighbors and friends enjoying and sharing a dining experience? A prerequisite for a good dining experience for this writer goes well beyond the contents of the served plates. A core ingredient is memory: memories evoked from the past as well as memories being created for the future that are inspired by the ingredients, flavors, colors, and textures; by the ambience that may (or may not) engage you; and by the sharing of food exploration and friendships.

Recently, after a late morning Qigong workshop in Chinatown, as I undertook the cold walk back to my studio in the South End, I was craving some warm nourishment and found myself in a hole in the wall Chinese “café.” Little or no English was spoken by the counter order-taker who had no patience for Q & A. I ordered a heartwarming dish recalled from 20 years prior while studying in Beijing: bitter melon in scrambled eggs. Despite not being on the menu, I was swiftly served up a wonderful and comforting dish that powered me and my spirits the balance of the afternoon. The ambience was reminiscent of a working-class kitchen and delighted me in its authenticity. The experience had all the ingredients of a home-cooked meal.

The purpose of this retelling is to emphasize the integral importance of place, happenstance, memory, and authenticity, not as a recommendation for this café as a destination restaurant.

Having set the table so to speak for a destination restaurant review, I offer up my recommendation and review of SRV, a bacaro and wine bar I happened upon on Columbus Avenue in the South End. Not your typical Italian restaurant, SRV (Serene Republic of Venice) takes the diner back to the month you lived authentically (or imagine to

have lived) in Venice as a Venetian. Cicchetti, Piatti, and Grani constitute the loosely structured alternative dining options. Nothing pretentious here, just good options full of amazing flavors, colors, and textures, served family style and with welcomed friendliness.

The menu offers enough good options that you’re likely never bored or disappointed. The website delineates all the choices, but I do have some recent favorites: I highly recommend sharing Cicchetti to begin, and I particularly enjoy the baccala mantecato, and the grilled octopus, but don’t stop there. Experimenting is always gratifying. Some evenings dinner may consist of several Cicchetti and a shared Piatti or Grani or skip the starters and share a couple of main dishes. The pastas never disappoint and the wine list offers good options and value. For this diner an outstanding Grani is the Squid Ink Bigoli: a very tasty and rich ragu of calamari, tomato, and seasonings. The squid ink pasta is extraordinary. The flavors transported me momentarily to the sea and the rocky coast of my childhood... a simpler time before the complexity of today.

After eating this dish several times, I asked if there were any chance the chef would share his recipe because I imagined cooking this on the Cape in the summer when the squid are abundant and wash ashore for the taking. I left the waiter my email not expecting a response, but next day I received a personal note with the recipe from Chef Tyler Chase, in full detail. Later that day, Tyler wrote again saying, “Mitch, I just realized that I didn’t incorporate the garlic into the recipe. You can grind it with the carrots/celery/onions.”

So there you have it, a uniquely authentic experience where dining is much more than the contents on the plate, and where we all might meet up by happenstance to a not-so-well-kept secret. Online you can discover the complete menu and learn about the material amenities.

Mitch Glassman

An Invitation to a New Interest Group

Esplanade Environmental Study Group

As most of us are aware, our society's window of opportunity to ward off the most catastrophic consequences of global warming is closing more rapidly than had been predicted even a couple of years ago. That is the message of a series of recent prestigious scientific reports. Lists of the most important remedial steps that must be taken routinely include *increasing the energy efficiency of existing buildings*.

With that urgent, multi-faceted challenge in mind, I invite interested members of the Esplanade community to join an Environmental

Study Group. Its mission would be (1) to learn about best energy-saving practices for buildings like ours, in other countries as well as in ours; and (2) to use what we learn to support and assist the Esplanade's management and Board of Trustees in their efforts to reduce our building's carbon footprint.

If you are interested in joining this group, please email me -- rak@berkeley.edu -- adding any special knowledge or experience you may have -- although that is not a prerequisite; interest in contacting and learning from those with more knowledge and experience is what matters.

Bob Kagan W203

Curious About That Ugly Lot at Athenaeum and Third Streets??

Originally planned and pledged 20 years ago for a grand performance hall by Glenn Knickrehm, the 35,865 square foot site's fundraising failed and the Constellation Center was not to be. It was sold in August for \$50.5 million to BioMed Realty Trust, a San Diego Company with offices in Kendall Square. According to Liza Paden, of the Cambridge Community Development Department, the BioMed Realty group is discussing options for the property, covering what was permitted in the original Planning Board Special Permit #141, Theater Use, and what the City of Cambridge would like to see in future development. The discussions are ongoing and no decisions or plans have been developed as of yet. There will be significant public process as this parcel is part of a Planned Unit Development District and the City will encourage community engagement be ongoing and as early as possible. Stay tuned for further developments at: www.cambridgema.gov/CDD