MEMBER SUBMISSION: OPEN STREETS NOT FOR ALL

September 24, 2024



By Denise DeYonker

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The Open Streets Program is not for all. The program that was once welcomed during the pandemic is now harming businesses and residents and with little to no oversight, accountability or transparency for the nonprofits that run them.

ONLY CERTAIN BUSINESS MODELS BENEFIT FROM THE STREET CLOSURES. MITCHELL'S SOUL FOOD, A 40-YEAR-OLD BLACK-OWNED BUSINESS, IS NOT ONE

OF THEM.

There is no requirement for community consultation or consent to close down a street, even a critical traffic artery. That has been our experience in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn—with the closure of Vanderbilt Avenue, a major thoroughfare, for six months a year, three days a week. Only certain business models benefit from the street closures. Mitchell's Soul Food, a 40-year-old Black-owned business, is not one of them. The Sunday street closures shuts out their customers who drive or take the bus after church, as they have for decades.



The crowd gathered outside of American Vegan on Saturday, June 26.

Despite government officials intervening on that restaurant's behalf, the nonprofit that runs the Vanderbilt Open Streets program won't budge. *BKReader* ran an article

in May of this year about Mitchell’s. Another restaurant, American Vegan, already closed down, in large part after a series of run-ins with the nonprofit.

Neighboring streets are clogged with traffic when the three-day street closures are in effect, harming businesses and residents in the surrounding area. Prospect Heights is a privileged neighborhood with ample access to beautiful green spaces (including a brand new one, Pacific Park). It is difficult to justify the need for the concrete open space when the harm to many clearly outweighs the few who benefit. A group of neighbors came together to fight back and the United Neighbors of Prospect and Crown Heights was born.

MY GRANDFATHER, AN EPICUREAN SPY

September 24, 2024

KATHERINE FENNELLY

FAMILY DECLASSIFIED:

UNCOVERING MY GRANDFATHER'S JOURNEY FROM SPY TO CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR



Member Submission by *Katherine Fennelly*

If my Hungarian-American grandfather were alive today and living in Brooklyn, I have no doubt he would be a member of the Park Slope Food Coop. Francis Kalnay, or “Fer-ko” as we called him, was many things: a linguist, a spy for the Allies in World War II, an award-winning children’s book author and a designer of houses in Valle de Bravo, Mexico.



Francis “Ferko” Kalna making a loaf of bread in California, 1980s. Photo provided by Katherine Fennelly.

Ferko was also a superb chef who roasted his own coffee beans, milled his own flour, harvested honey from bee hives, cured meats in an underground smokehouse and grew fruits and vegetables on his properties in Mexico, and then in California. Late in his life he invented and marketed a bread plate (below) and built bread ovens for neighbors.

VIRGINIA SAFFORD’S BOOK WAS ABOUT THE BEST MEALS SHE HAD EVER EATEN.

ONE OF THE CHAPTERS FEATURED A REPAST PREPARED BY FERKO AT HIS B&B IN VALLE DE BRAVO.



The Greatful Bread Plate, invented by Francis “Ferko” Kalna. Photo provided by Katherine Fennelly.

My grandfather’s skill as a chef was highlighted in the book *Friends and Their Food* written by Minneapolis food writer Virginia Safford,[1] who visited him in Mexico, where he lived for 20 years after the war. Safford’s book was about the best meals she had ever eaten. One of the chapters featured a repast prepared by Ferko at his B&B in Valle de Bravo. She writes:

I saw a load of various beans drying in the sun on his terrace, and the smell of the freshly brewed coffee was almost as tantalizing as the bread. Everything we ate at

the simple wooden table in his little kitchen, with the cooking going on in full view, was delicious. We started out with what might be called country antipasto. In the middle of a table were crisp radishes and small green onions garnishing a platter of sliced, home-smoked turkey breast [from an underground smokehouse] to be eaten on fresh buttered rye bread. Then came the soup…and authentic Hungarian stuffed cabbage rolls. Last was Hungarian rum cake with wild strawberry jam and home-roasted coffee.

In addition to preparing delectable meals, Ferko wrote about cooking and published a series of articles for the magazine *House Beautiful.* An example shown below featured recipes for cooking with fresh flowers. Others highlighted smoked meats and Hungarian dishes, such as stuffed cabbage.

Flowers in Cooking?

And why not? Flowers are sugar and spice and other things nice. They can broaden your palette of flavors in several piquant directions. This summer give them a whirl in your kitchen

By FRANCIS KALNAY



An article Ferko wrote for *House Beautiful*, April 1960. Photo provided by Katherine Fennelly.

You can read more about my grandfather's life as a spy, linguist, children's book author and an epicure in my book: *Family Declassified* (Sunbury Press, 2023).

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[1] *Friends and Their Food* by Virginia [Safford, Virginia. Friends and Their Food. Dillon Press, New York, 1969.] Safford, 1968