
Central Park Dance Skaters Association

Newsletter © C.P.D.S.A., 1995

Editorial: Roslyn Dotson, Maureen Eckert, Bob Nichols, Brent Nosworthy, Lezly Ziering,

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No Good News...Yet

C.P.D.S.A. representatives met with officials from the Parks Department, the NYPD and Central Park Enforcement on Thursday (April 6) to propose a solution to the current problems on Skaters' Road. Lezly Ziering opened the meeting with a short background sketch of the history of the Skaters' Circle and its prominence in the roller skating world.

Brent Nosworthy then provided a ten-minute presentation of our recommendations (see below.) A police official closed the presentation phase with a short explanation of recent crime patterns in our general area. The discussion phase, unfortunately, proved to be unproductive and quickly came to an impasse. The Parks Dept. felt last year's agreement was a complete failure. Despite a mutual agreement, tapes continued to be sold and the "jug" passed around, and stuck in tourists' faces.

The Parks Department recommended that anyone who wishes to dance skate to anything but Walkmans should relocate to the Wollman Rink, and has suggested that our association could work out some special arrangement with the rink in terms of the price of admission. C.P.D.S.A. responded by pointing out that Wollman Rink is not held in high regard by many skaters, and regardless of whatever accommodations could be made for our group there would still be an admission charge. Not to mention that children shorter than an adult's knees and speed skaters are hazardous to serious dance skaters.

After asking several probing questions about the police official's presentation, Bob Nichols was answered with a firm negative when he asked if even small boom boxes would be permitted on an informal basis. Unfortunately, no accord was reached.

The C.P.D.S.A. Proposal

We are in the process of forming a legal and formal non-profit corporation. In the last several weeks over 500 individuals have expressed an interest in joining the fledgling C.P.D.S.A. Our prospective membership covers a truly wide range of people and collectively we represent a pool of significant human resources.

One or two examples should suffice to explain this approach and its likelihood of success. One criticism that has been directed against large systems is that sooner or later the individuals bringing these into the park will resort to commercial activity to remunerate their efforts. We intend to raise money legally, following all federal and state guidelines for non-profit organizations. A portion of this money would be used to buy appropriate stereo equipment and then pay an employee to bring

out this equipment on weekends. This approach curtails the tendency to resort to tapes sales at the source by undercutting its economic basis.

Another major criticism has been the volume of sound during the last two years. We have proposed to bring out much more suitable equipment. In the past, music providers have brought out "long throw" systems which were intentionally used to project the sound long distances. We advocate a "distributed" sound system where a number of smaller speakers would circle our rink. Their smaller enclosures would, on one hand, would ensure that "low frequency bleed" would be greatly reduced (this is the thumping you hear from a distance) while the "throw" (distance) would be also reduced to a small fraction. These are examples of thoughtful detailed solutions which address each problem or criticism systematically.

The City's Arguments

The following represents the Parks Department viewpoint and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the C.P.D.S.A.

The Police and Parks Department offered three major reasons for stopping amplified music in our area.

1) Last year, a number of groups used large systems and the result was that there was a tremendous amount of noise emanating from the 72nd street area of the park. They have decided, therefore, to eliminate all of these sound systems.

2) The police department maintains that the last two years has seen a dramatic increase in crime between the Bethesda fountain and the Sheeps Meadow. They analysis for the reason for this trend, as well as its solution is as follows. The skaters provide an interesting spectacle which quickly draws a large crowd. Tourists walking through the park come over to see what is happening. Sooner or later, this congregation of tourists draws an underclass of pick-pockets, thieves etc. who prey on the unsuspecting. The police advocate what is termed the "precursor" theory of law enforcement. Simply put, if an activity, institution, etc. draws people, and if there is a criminal element among that crowd, the end to the event.

3) According to one parks official, the dance skaters have gone through the normal infancy period of most groups or organizations. Formerly a small informal collection of individuals it is now an institution. As such, it no longer has a right to Central Park because it is not the park's policy to provide services for formal bodies, such as a non-profit organization.

Please be kind. Don't Litter!

Our Next Step

The C.P.D.S.A. is employing a twofold response to the Parks Department's actions/arguments.

1) We have a number of individuals professionally interested in the issues underlying this controversy, such as first amendment lawyers, sociologists, criminologists, etc. Over the next several weeks we are holding a public forum on these issues. We will attempt to reach a consensus whether the Park Department's actions/arguments are legal and/or constitutional.

2) We are a legitimate group of law abiding citizens who believe in the system and the political process. As such, we will make every effort to redress our grievances through established political channels. This means applying public pressure on our politicians at all levels and creating public awareness of what we believe to be the real issues in the media. --- Editor

Note: During this crises sanitation crews find about *five* time sas many broken bottles in our area. This action does not help our cause. Please try to explain this to anyone you might see engaging in this type of activity.

The View From Skaters Road

It was late on a Sunday afternoon last May; the kind of gray muggy day when the question is not whether it was going to rain, but when. I came out to the park hoping to skate for an hour before sunset. When I got there the circle was rolling at full speed, the music was perfect, the regular crowd was skating, dancing and having a great time.

Suddenly there was a loud clap of thunder and a fine drizzle started falling; the sky grew darker and the rain grew heavier. A large blue vinyl tarpaulin materialized and with the cooperation of a few skaters, was quickly unfolded to cover the pavement of the uptown half of the circle. When the tarp was fully open , I lifted the end I was holding and stood under it. Within a few seconds, most of the other skaters were crowded under the blue vinyl to get out of the rain. We quickly discovered that by pushing up on the material and pulling on the corners , we could make the tarp billow up and float in the air. Since the sound system was safe under a large beach umbrella, the music continued to play. The party did not end, the blue tent fluttered in the breeze over our heads as we danced. A feeling swept through the crowd; we were all connected in a moment of transcendent beauty. The blue roof undulating over our heads was the result of a joyous cooperation; there were no leaders, no bosses, no one was in control and yet nothing out of control. It was a Kodak moment for the family of skaters. Those of us who were there will not forget the magic of that day.

Those skaters who are disheartened by the lack of music for the circle, just remember: we have weathered storms in the past and we

will weather the squall that threatens us now. A sense of humor, a great deal of patience and a strong belief in ourselves and our love of skating are the fabric that will shelter us now. Keep the faith, keep on skating. The Central Park Skate Circle Lives!

-- Bob Nichols

Official Contacts

To help save the music on Skaters' Road, we need your non-skating talents! **Attention** para-legals, fund raisers, publicists, artists, writers, lawyers, accountants (or at least one), data base programmers, as well as people willing to roll up their sleeves and perform some old fashioned hard work! If you are interested in helping us, please let us know. All inquiries should be directed to:

Brent Nosworthy (718) 797-0592

Lezly Ziering: (212) 777-3232

Bob Nichols (212) 246-1344

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