

VRDC vs. Roskoffs

By Tim James

In the October 18-31 Talking Turkey, Allen and Dan Roskoff offered a truly astonishing reading of the results of September's primary contest between the Village Reform Democratic Club (VRDC) and the Village Independent Democrats (VID). Most striking was their jaundiced "analysis" of the local Civil Court contest between VRDC-backed Bill Thom (the first openly gay trial judge in New York State), and VID-backed Alice Schlesinger and Harvey Glasser.

The brothers Roskoff read Schlesinger's victory in the judgeship race as a decisive repudiation of Ed Koch, who had appointed Thom to a Civil Court vacancy and supported his candidacy for a full term. According to the Roskoffs, Koch was an "albatross" who cost Thom and the VRDC the support of "progressive" Koch-haters in the Village.

But the Roskoffs' wishful thesis falls apart under scrutiny. To begin with, almost all of Schlesinger's winning margin was accumulated not in the Village, but in the downtown sections of the judicial district. Schlesinger's margin in the Village (Part A of the 61st AD) would appear decisive only if viewed through a microscope. Look at the breakdown of the race by area:

61st AD, Part A (Village):

Schlesinger	2,153	39.7%
Thom	2,065	38.0%
Glasser	1,210	22.3%

61st AD, Part B (Downtown):

Schlesinger	737	47.7%
Thom	219	14.2%
Glasser	589	38.1%

62nd AD (Lower East Side):

Schlesinger	280	24.1%
Thom	261	22.5%
Glasser	617	53.3%

Schlesinger's 88-vote margin in the Village — out of more than 5,400 votes cast — is a shaky foundation indeed upon which to build a scenario of a decisive VID victory. Moreover, the Roskoffs' theory that it was Koch-haters like themselves who did Thom in just doesn't stand up under analysis. In fact, using the 1982 gubernatorial primary results as a gauge of Koch's popularity, the Village election districts where Thom beat Schlesinger were more anti-Koch than those where Schlesinger topped Thom. The Thom districts chose Cuomo over Koch by 54.9% to 45.1%, while the Schlesinger districts preferred Cuomo over Koch by only 53.6% to 46.4%. Looked at another way, the Village districts that voted for Cuomo in 1982 gave Thom an 18-vote plurality; the

PAGE 11 TALKING TURKEY DECEMBER, 1984

districts that voted for Koch gave a 106-vote margin to Schlesinger.

Prospective judicial (or other) candidates surveying the Village scene would do well to ponder the Thom-Schlesinger-Glasser race, where VRDC and VID were on different sides, and the countywide Civil Court race between Phyllis Gangel Jacobs and Antonio Brandveen, where Jacob received the endorsement of both clubs. The comparative figures looked like this:

Schlesinger	2,153	39.7%
Thom	2,065	38.0%
Glasser	1,210	22.3%
Jacob	6,070	87.4%
Brandveen	873	12.6%

The results suggest that VID can claim unwavering allegiance from no more than 40% of Village voters, not overly impressive for a long-entrenched "official" club that can afford \$18,000 a year in rent against a fledgling challenger — the VRDC — operating chiefly out of its president's living room.

To be fair, the VRDC had help from the Gay & Lesbian Independent Democrats. Moreover, there is no disputing that VID's solid win in the 61st AD State Committee race means that VID had clearly earned the right to be considered the top dog in the Village for at least another year. But it's just as clear that Greenwich Village is now a two-club neighborhood.

Tim James is a member of the Village Reform Democratic Club.

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