

An Interview with Michael D. Minichiello, Author of *West Village Originals*



WEST VILLAGE ORIGINALS AUTHOR MICHAEL D. MINICHELLO, above, has added up the "sum of the parts" to create a complete collection of interviews with longtime West Villagers. Photo credit: David Plakke.

By William Repicci

It was a little over 12 years ago when my better half, Michael D. Minichiello, came home saying he had met the quintessential Village character who published WestView News. His name was George Capsis, and he sounded like the crusty but benevolent publisher one would see come to life in films from the 1940s. George was not only a publisher, but he was also an activist with a finger on the pulse of the West Village and a force with which to reckon. Michael had offered himself to George as writer and it seemed George was always looking for new talent to realize his vision for a local paper.

When did you begin writing for WestView News?

In 2008. I'm a graphic designer by profession and I called George, the publisher, in response to an ad he placed in this paper looking for someone to perform that function. However, when George found out that I had an MFA in film, he suggested I review movies for the paper instead. So, I did. But I soon discovered I enjoyed writing about other subjects even more, and before long I had the idea for a column called "West Village Originals." It occurred to me that there had to be many longtime West Village residents with interesting things to say about their lives, their careers, and the vast changes that have taken place in the area.

You talked about monthly meetings at George's house that sounded like gath-

erings of the Algonquin Round Table. Is that a fair analogy?

I can't say that anyone will be writing books about our witty bon mots from those meetings, but as far as being a group of literary-minded people who gathered regularly to share story ideas, there is some fair comparison to be made. Like the fabled Round Table, there would be the regulars one could count on seeing every month. And then there were those who flitted in and out. We were all very different people, but there was one thing that tied us together: a love of the written word and of the special nature of the West Village.

You qualify as a West Village Original yourself now, don't you?

I celebrated my 47th anniversary of moving to the West Village this past October 26th. I remember that day very clearly. Still a teenager, I had packed my belongings in the back of my mother's Volkswagen station wagon, left the family home in Nyack, and took the 40-minute drive to my new apartment on Perry Street. I unpacked, drove the car back home, had lunch with my parents, and then my father drove me to the bus stop where I waited for the bus back into town. After we said goodbye and my father drove away, I cried my eyes out as one does when they are ending one chapter of their life and beginning a new one—even one as exciting as this was. I've never regretted the move. However, the Perry Street apartment would be short-lived as I soon realized the drawbacks of an apartment on the ground floor front. A

few months later, I moved to a third-floor apartment on Grove Street. And, of course, since 1990 we've lived on Horatio Street in an apartment on the eighth floor. So, I've been moving up!

Now you have a book being published this month that represents all those years of writing your column for WestView News. What do you want us to tell us about that book?

The book, like the column, is titled *West Village Originals: An Oral History of New York City's Most Unique Neighborhood*. It features 90 interviews that I conducted over the years with a broad variety of long-time West Villagers, all of them our friends and neighbors. It includes writers, journalists, musicians, activists, business owners, and artists of all media who make up the fabric of this unique community. Whereas each had a story to tell of what brought them to the West Village and how they thrived here, each would then muse about the special nature of this community that had nurtured them over the years. Yes, they mourned some of the changes here

but, ultimately, they had to admit that the West Village had given them a quality of life they felt certain they never would have found anywhere else.

What made you decide this was the time to publish all the interviews to date?

There's a point where one senses that the sum of the parts has added up to a whole. The book focuses on a time when the West Village was going through enormous change. Certainly, the AIDS epidemic and the influx of tremendous wealth were two of the factors that drove these changes. However, as much as things might have changed, one thing miraculously remained the same for all those interviewed: the sense that the West Village is still an Oz-like community like no other and that there is no place like home.

West Village Originals, published by Bios Books, is available at Three Lives & Company Bookstore on West 10th Street and through online retailers.

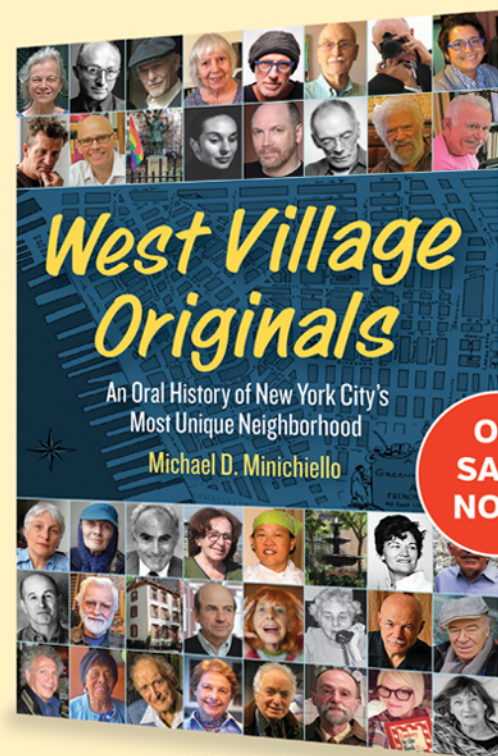
A favorite WestView column is now a book!

Known as "Little Bohemia" since 1916, New York City's West Village has long been a haven for intellectuals, writers, artists, and activists. Michael D. Minichiello's entertaining book—a collection of his columns that appeared in *WestView News*—captures both the modern day changes and the essence of this unique neighborhood through ninety insightful interviews with your friends and neighbors.

West Village Originals paints an enlivening portrait of this Oz-like neighborhood where the prevailing sentiment of its denizens is that there is no place like the West Village.

"A delightful group portrait of the West Village as it has been and can be!"

—Kirkus Reviews



ON SALE NOW!

Published by Bios Books

Available at
Three Lives & Company
238 West 10th Street, NYC

