



**WHO'S THE MAYOR OF TIMES SQUARE?** Richard Falk (l.) and Richard Roffman both lay claim to the title. A special election will decide.

C.J. ZUMWALT

By TOM O'NEILL

**T**hongs have been passing through Times Square for years, spared the troubling knowledge that not one but two mayors presided over their Great White Way. Not anymore.

Last month, The Westsider, a neighborhood weekly, called an election to determine once and for all, "Who's the Mayor of Times Square?" On Saturday, after a heated campaign that saw a debate on the "Joe Franklin Show," ballot distribution parties at the China Club and Woody's, and a rally on Duffy Square, the winner will be declared.

Befitting the character of their constituency, candidates Richard Roffman and Richard Falk, both fast-talking publicity agents, could not be more deserving of the title to which they lay claim. These septuagenarians have slid right out of the pages of Damon Runyon.

Silver-mustachioed Richard Falk, buried in heaps of yellowed clippings and stacks of press releases that clutter his Times Square office, was officially named mayor of 42d St by Mayor Robert Wagner. Burrowing through the mess, he

## THE BEST MAN

Two bloodhounds of Broadway race to rule the Great White Way

miraculously surfaces with a photocopy of his official mayor's badge ("Haven't seen the real thing in years").

Richard Roffman, purportedly the model for Woody Allen's Broadway Danny Rose, insists he has been the mayor of Times Square since March 14, 1961, and has a certificate (somewhere) from the International Locality of Mayors to prove it.

In his crowded West End Ave. apartment-office, the rotund Roffman sits behind paper stacks that rival his rival's. As if to demonstrate the fearlessness required of the mayor of such a locale, he defies the laws of gravity and yanks a sheet from midstack. It's a photocopy of a letter from Mayor

Koch with the salutation, "From one mayor to another."

Says Roffman, "In the minds of thousands and thousands of people who've known me, I've always been the mayor of Times Square."

"He's an interloper," charges Falk. He derides his opponent for living and working away from Times Square. Falk claims to have welcomed every President since Herbert Hoover to Times Square while Roffman, he says, "was uptown sleeping."

In his 50 years on 42d St, Falk has flacked more than 1,500 plays and such talents as Herman and the World's Most Intelligent Flea, Jayne Mansfield and a funny girl from Brooklyn named Streisand whom he "got off the ground" by literally standing her on her head.

Roffman, the son of a Broadway orchestra leader, has toiled as a radio broadcaster and TV personality

(his talk show is the longest-running cable show). As a publicist, Roffman's roster past and present includes the world's tallest man, a one-armed juggler, and a fellow who plays piano with his hands tied behind his back. He takes credit for having been the first to "put the Gabor girls on the air."

**A**ccording to Joe Franklin, a friend of both candidates and therefore reluctant to make an endorsement, "They are each dedicated to getting what they perceive as best for the area."

Proclaims Roffman, "Step by step Times Square should be redeveloped. Times Square needs a pure and unblemished reputation."

Falk cringes at this blasphemy. "Keep it as is!" shouts the self-professed friend to street-walkers, pimps and porno shop owners. "Take away the freaks and you have another Main St."

The diametrically opposed candidates are steeling themselves for Saturday's outcome. If a concession speech is necessary, Roffman promises to be polite but adds, "I will always be known in the minds of thousands and thousands of New Yorkers...."

Falk raises his chin and announces, "If I lose this battle, I shall go down with 42d St."

(Tom O'Neill is a freelance writer.)

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February 18, 1990

TODAY



Family outing

**A**t 2 p.m., the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West, hosts the first public showing of the documentary film "The Journey Within" and a special performance of the theater piece "The World of Something." Sponsored by the Touchstone Center and based on the original poetry, stories and drawings of elementary and middle-school students, the presentation takes children and their families into the many worlds of the imagination.

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## UNDISCOVERED MANHATTAN

By HOPE COOKE

**S**amuel Tilden, defeated for the U.S. presidency in 1878 after scoring a popular-vote victory but a one-vote loss in the Electoral College, bought his first house in Gramercy Park in 1863. He had architect Griffith Thomas remove the Gothic veranda and other trim and install elaborate domes above the principal rooms.

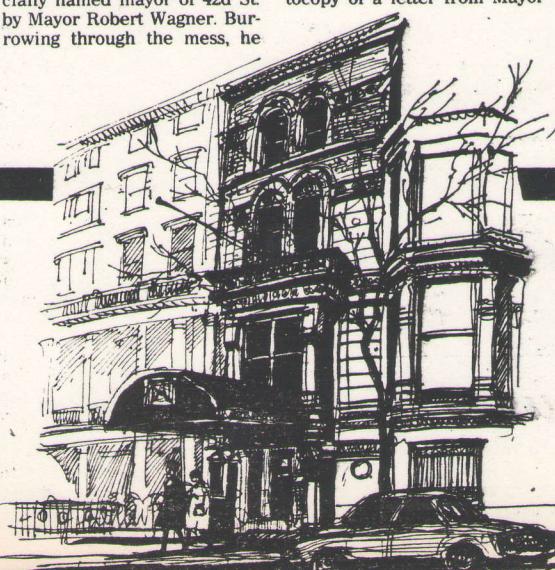
In 1874, Tilden bought the house next door and seven years later commissioned Calvert Vaux, architect of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Central

Park, to merge both houses into a single Victorian mansion (15 Gramercy Park South). Ironically, Vaux Gothicized the exterior.

The house epitomizes the Arts and Crafts movement. As assembly-line production grew, wealthy people came to prize the work of such craftsmen as John LaFarge, who did the inner vestibule glass doors of Tilden's house, as much as any painter or sculptor.

The 40-room mansion was salvaged in 1906 when it became the new headquarters of the National Arts Club.

(Hope Cooke is a city historian and walking tour guide.)



JOE PAPIN DAILY NEWS