

Astoria This Week

Astoria's Stories, Person By Person

After moving to New York City in 2007, Annabel Short became smitten with multicultural diversity within the frantically flowing metropolis.

In 2009, when the London native moved to Astoria, she became compelled by the true meaning of diversity and decided to document history as it happened.

As opposed to standing on the outside, Short grabbed a mic and began mixing it up with locals, resulting in a borough blog which is giving a voice to the inhabitants along 30th Ave.

"[30thAve.org] is a mix of voices," Short said. "People coming and going, young and

old, they're the strength of this neighborhood. Somehow that diverse balance works here and it's the project's narrative."

Each week Short heads out into the neighborhood in search of the next inspirational story to be told.

From Md Kamruzzaman, the Bangladeshi taxi driver, idly sitting at the corner of 30th Avenue and 30th Street waiting for his next fare to Nancy Vinson, a neighborhood local whose lived in Astoria for nearly 30 years, Short never finds herself at a loss for material. Although Short does have a day job, she admits that her fascination with the unofficial beat she has taken head on has slightly con-

sumed part of her life.

"Although I try not to let it, I can't help but be curious about all the interesting people around me," said Short as she temporarily lost focus looking at an intriguing elderly ethnic gentleman with his coat slung over his shoulders.

"He's also someone I'd really like to interview," Short quickly uttered with a curious smile. "It's probably better to ask my husband if I've become distracted. The project is on my mind all the time."

Nonetheless, Short acknowledges her passion for the project also helps out during the day, as the program director of a nonprofit organization she has worked for since moving across the pond.

Despite her multifaceted, fast-paced life, Short seems to juggle many titles all with the ease and poise of a debutante turned dignitary in a neighborhood she now calls home.

Since beginning her project last December, Short has also seen her work spread virally, making her a slightly well-known figure within the community.

In the near future the British blogger hopes to turn the project into a book, but as she continues to compile interviews, her work seems to be attracting the attention Queens' history buffs.

On July 20, Short unveiled a series of her photographs at the Greater Astoria Historical Society.

The exhibition, which runs through October, is a first for Short. The display features

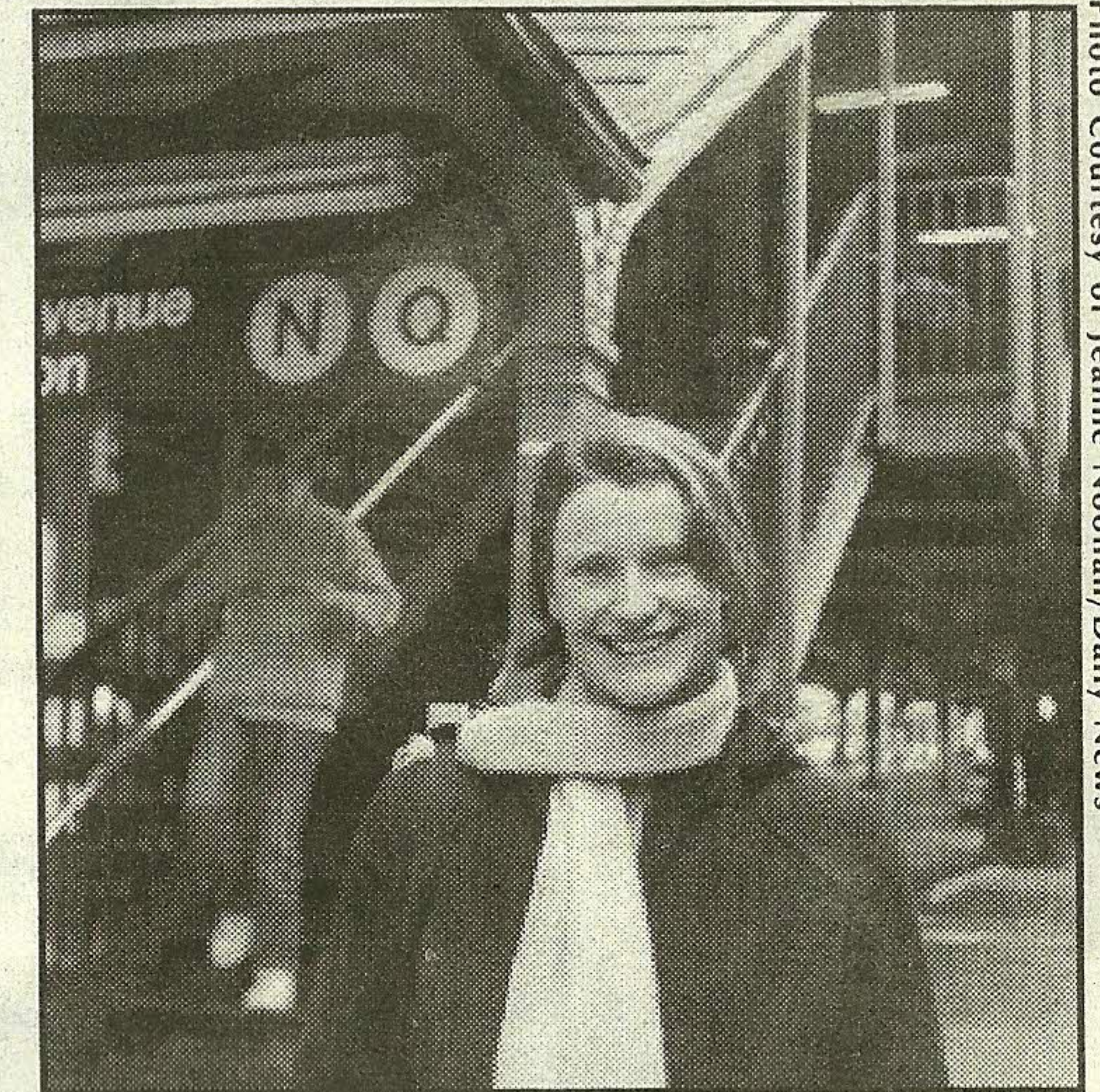


Photo Courtesy of Jeanne Noonan/Daily News

Annabel Short hopes to capture 52 stories along 30th Avenue in 2011.

Man Grabs, Bikes Off

Councilman Peter Vallone Jr. (D-Astoria) is seeking information to help find a man groping women in Astoria while riding a bicycle. Following numerous recent accounts posted by victims on WhyLeaveAstoria.com and other Web sites, Vallone and the 114th Precinct are investigating the incidents and asking for any information that may lead to an arrest.

The suspect, described as Hispanic, with short brown hair, between 24 and 26 years-old, and approximately 5-foot-10, is wanted for riding his bike alongside women on the sidewalk, groping them and then taking off.

Many of the incidents have occurred along

30th Avenue and 31st Street, and also range between 25th Avenue and 34th Avenue in the 40s.

"This is a good example of how people can use social media like WhyLeaveAstoria as a type of neighborhood watch," Vallone said. "Many women might have thought theirs was an isolated incident not worth reporting, but we now know there's a serial groper riding his bike through our streets. This is a serious offense, and I urge anyone with any information to call the NYPD or my office."

To report an incident or any relevant information, call Vallone's office at (718) 274-4500, or the 114th Precinct at (718) 626-9311.

15 photographs of people who live and work along the vibrant community's corridor, accompanied by short extracts from her blog.

"[30thAve.org] is definitely taking off in ways I haven't expected it to," Short said. "The only way to tell this story, the story of this neighborhood is through its people. I can't wait to see what happens next after I get to 52."

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—Jason Banrey

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