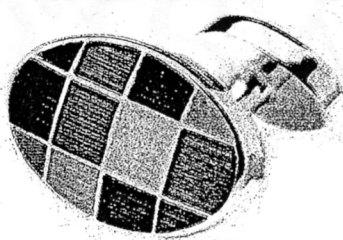
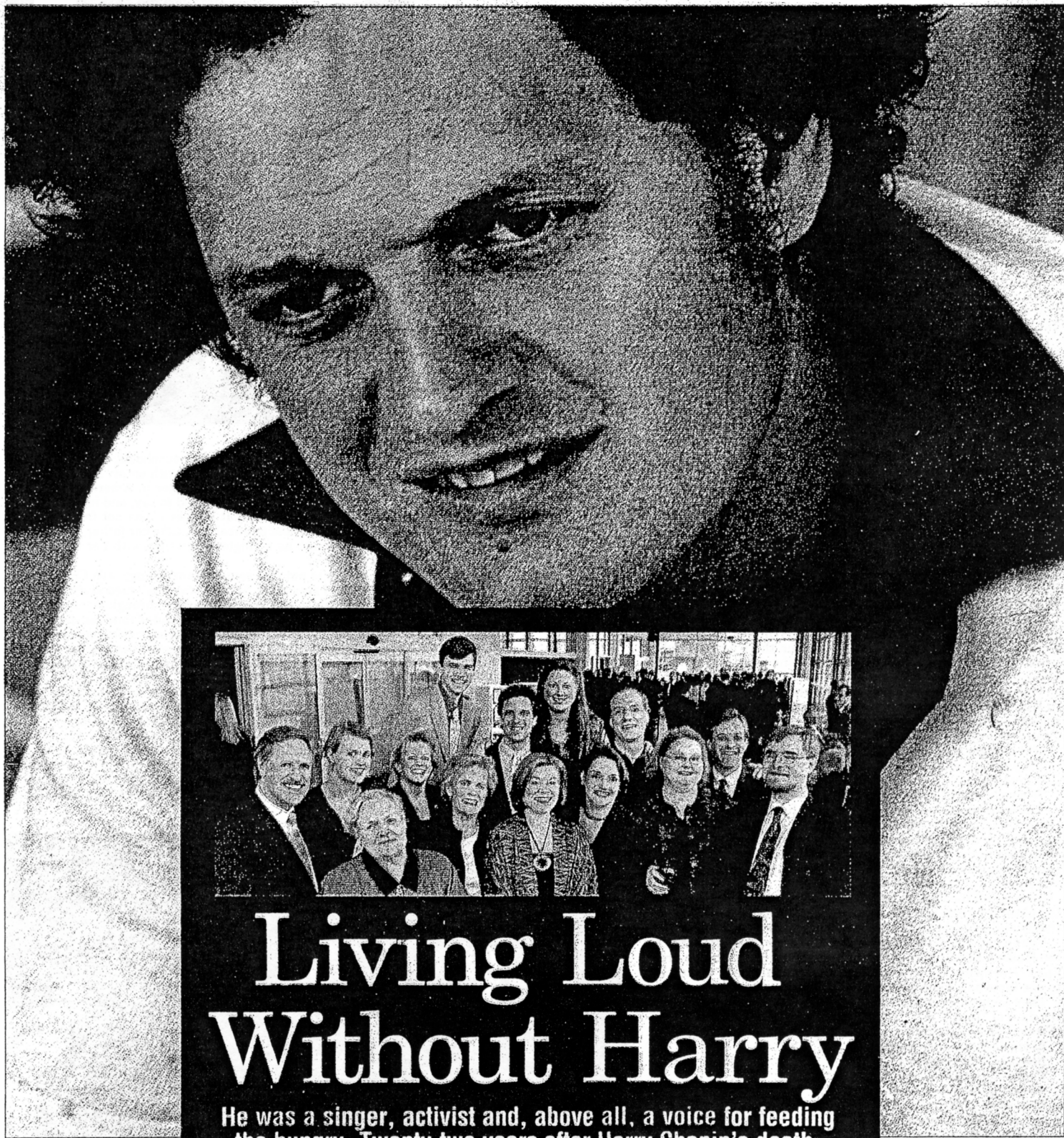


Part 2

FASHION&FITNESS
Presents for dad B15



FEIFFER
An artist
is drawn
back
to the
theater
B2



Living Loud Without Harry

He was a singer, activist and, above all, a voice for feeding the hungry. Twenty-two years after Harry Chapin's death, his family is still making noise — lots of it — for his causes. B6-7

Newsday File Photo, 1978;
Inset Photo by Leo Sorel

Stewards of His

Part 2

We all got louder after my dad died.

— Jen Chapin

C By Donald P. Myers
STAFF WRITER

Through a Monday night rain they came to the Chelsea Piers in Manhattan to make joyful noise to the spirit of Harry Chapin and the big, loud family he left behind.

They came to a World Hunger Year awards dinner to celebrate the human-rights work of the Long Island folksinger and social activist who topped the charts almost 30 years ago with such hits as "Cat's in the Hat," and then gave away a fortune to fight hunger and poverty.

"Harry would say to us, 'A dollar for me and a dollar for the other guy,'" said his widow, Sandy, now 68. "That's the way he thought people should live."

Harry Chapin, manic and mouthy, died the way he lived — in a hurry. He was killed in a car crash on the Long Island Expressway in Jericho 22 years ago this summer, leaving his wife and their five children, all grown now: Jaime, 42; Jono, 40; Jason, 38; Jen, 32; and Josh, 30.

The tall troubadour was just 38 when he died. At the singer's memorial service in 1981, James Chapin saluted his brother's social and political activism and challenged the family: "We can't fill Harry's shoes, but we have an obligation to fill our own."

To fill the silence, the Chapin family got a lot louder.

"My dad was such a bombastic spectacle that there was no need to make noise when he was around," said Jen Chapin, a Brooklyn musician who chairs the board of World Hunger Year, the organization her father co-founded 28 years ago to feed the poor.

"You can either be a giver or a taker," Harry Chapin had told his children as they grew. "With Harry as such a strong role model," said Jaime Chapin Miller, "many of us have decided to be givers — giving back to the communities in which we live."

Sandy Chapin chairs the board of Long Island Cares, the islandwide food bank started by her husband in 1980. Jaime is director of advancement for the New York City Mission Society, which helps inner-city children succeed in school. Jono is involved with community building projects in Middlebury, Vt. Jason works in education and volunteer services in Westchester. Jen, as chairwoman of the board of World Hunger Year, continues her father's work to feed the hungry. Chapin brothers Tom, 58, and Steve, 56, both singer-songwriters, work on poverty and hunger issues and perform at benefit concerts.

The Chapins came in the rain in May to the Lighthouse on Pier 61 for the World Hunger Year awards dinner. Singer Judy Collins, 64, was among those honored for their human-rights work. "Harry's spirit is here tonight," she told the crowd of about 300 people.

They talked about the tie-dye days when Harry Chapin lived in Huntington Bay and was singing his quirky story-songs, ranting against hunger and poverty and steamrolling Congress and President Jimmy Carter until the Presidential Commission on World Hunger was up and running.

They talked at the dinner about yesterday's dreams and today's reality.

"We've liberated Iraq — don't get me wrong, it had to be done — but we have serious problems here at home," said ponytailed Steve Chapin, drinking white wine in a wheelchair. He broke his right leg in a soccer game in Byram Township, N.J. "Our priorities are out of whack. We've lost more than 2 million jobs, the ship is going down and yet we're on this thing of more tax cuts, more money to the rich. It's crap."

Feeding off the Chapin legacy, the family makes noise — both the blood relatives and the extended family of human-rights activists still moved by the old music and political passion.

Young and old, Democrats and Republicans, they gathered at the Hudson River piers — not far from where Harry Chapin grew up in Greenwich Village — to celebrate one of the first celebrities to use fame as a force for the common good.

They yapped, laughed and sang a few old Chapin songs from the days of "Taxi," "W*O*L*D," "30,000 Pounds of Bananas" and "Circle." They sang this:

*Remember when the music
Brought us all together
To stand inside the rain,
And as we'd join our hands,
We'd meet in the refrain,
For we had dreams to live,
We had hopes to give.*

The dreams about ending poverty and hunger didn't come true, of course. In today's world, more than 840 million people are malnourished and more than 153 million of them are younger than 5, according to World Hunger Year. Of the world's 6.2 billion population, 1.2 billion live on less than \$1 a day. In Ameri-

Since Harry Chapin's death in a car crash in 1981, his family has worked to make sure that the social activism he championed lives on



Photo by Leo Sorel

Harry, above right, was remembered at the World Hunger Year dinner by his family. Front row from left: Harry's mother, Elspeth Hart; his widow, Sandy; Diana; Harry's daughter Jen; Angel, and James. Back row: Harry's brother Tom; Tom's daughter Abigail; Harry's daughter Jaime; David; Tim Miller; Dana; Harry's brother Steve and son Jason. Below: Tom, Abigail and Jen sing.



Newsday Photo, 1974

ca, 33 million people live in hungry households, including 13 million children who go to bed at night with empty stomachs.

"Hunger is an obscenity, and hunger in America is the ultimate obscenity," Harry Chapin used to say, and his family still believes it. They believe that hunger exists not from a lack of food but from a lack of political will. Like her father, Jen Chapin balances a career as a singer-songwriter with her hunger and poverty work.

"This work is not just some dreamy thing," Jen Chapin said. "This is how I stay alive. My dad was a talented storyteller, but his biggest talent was communication, through words, through passion, through charity. There are a lot of families that have a commitment to social justice, but maybe they're not as noisy as we are. We shouldn't be held up as something special. If everybody would just do a little bit to help, hunger and poverty wouldn't be that big of a deal."

Social relevance has always been a big deal for the Chapins. Born into a left-wing family of New Yorkers who valued art, music, philosophy and academic achievement, Harry Chapin was raised in a three-room apartment on West 11th Street above a longshoremen's office. He wound up flunking out of Cornell, tried film writing and drove a taxi. In 1968, he married Sandy Gaston, and they settled on Long Island with her three children, Jaime, Jono and Jason. Jen and Josh were born later,



Photo by Leo Sorel

Legacy

Part 2 C



Photo by Leo Sorel



Newsday File Photo

and by then, Chapin's musical career and social activism were flourishing.

The voices in Chapin's ear came from his wife, who wrote the lyrics to "Cat's in the Cradle"; his brother James, a historian and political scientist who died in 2002; and Frances Moore Lappe, an expert on world hunger and author of "Diet for a Small Planet," the 1971 book that sold a generation on the politics and practice of vegetarianism. Chapin started Long Island Cares the year before he died.

"Harry talked about 'We have to stop feeding the symptoms and get to the real root causes of hunger and poverty,'" said Sandy Chapin, who still lives in the big house with a water view in Huntington Bay. She said her family had helped change the focus of human-rights groups from mere charity to a recognition that "you have to help make people self-sufficient. You can't just keep putting bandages on the problems."

With job-training programs that help people become self-reliant, finding solutions to hunger and poverty is the focus of both World Hunger Year and Long Island Cares. Some solutions, however, can be elusive.

"Of all the factors, racism is the biggest contributor to poverty," Sandy Chapin said. "Long Island is a remarkably pocketed community."

Lynn Needelman, executive director of Long Island Cares,

Josh and Jen Chapin in Manhattan last month at the World Hunger Year awards dinner, above, and with their dad, above right, at home in 1974.

Harry founded Long Island Cares, below, in 1980. Lynn Needelman, right, is executive director.

said she sees the effects of poverty and racism most often on the faces of single women with children: "We have women coming into our program that are so shattered from the experience of living in poverty that they won't even look you in the eye."

When Harry Chapin started Long Island Cares, he said its job-training programs that help people become self-sufficient would put the food bank out of business. Would he be disappointed that that didn't happen, that hunger and poverty are bigger problems now than they were when he was alive?

"No," Needelman said. "Although I am convinced that we would be doing better if he were still with us, Harry would be proud that we are helping so many people."

More than 350,000 Long Islanders depend on the Hauppauge food bank for help at 589 agencies during the year, Needelman said. Because of the fallen economy and budget cuts in food-assistance programs, Needelman said hunger and poverty in Nassau and Suffolk have increased by 10 percent since the terror attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

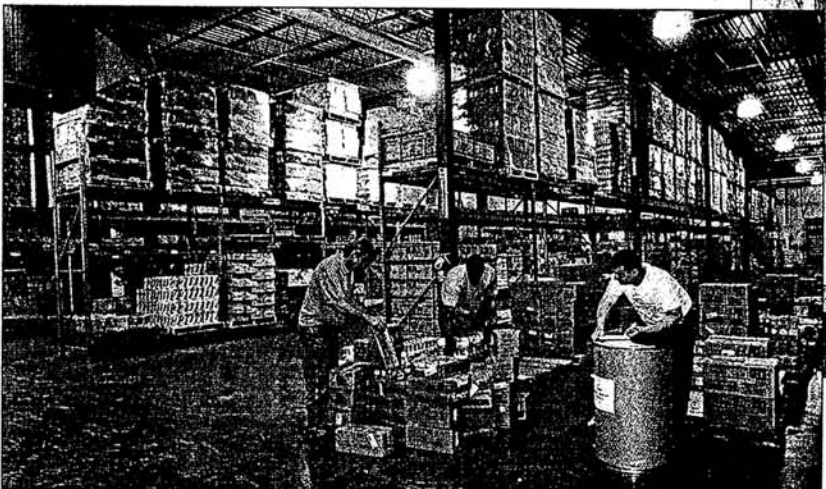
As hunger on Long Island increases, Needelman said, food and financial donations have decreased. "It's not due to a lack of wanting to give. It's from a lack of ability to give. These are tough economic times. People fear for the future."

To meet the increased need, the number of Long Island nonprofit agencies that help feed the poor has increased 28 percent in the past four years. The agencies, both public and private, include emergency food pantries, soup kitchens, senior nutrition sites, day-care centers and homeless shelters.

Harry Chapin supported Long Island Cares and other causes by doing benefit concerts — half of his more than 200 annual performances. On the July afternoon he was killed, he was on his way to a benefit concert in Eisenhower Park in East Meadow, where thousands waited to hear his musical tales about taxi drivers, waitresses, DJs, sons and fathers, and free spirits.

Needelman, now 56, met Chapin in 1977, while she was working at the now-defunct Performing Arts Foundation in Hunting-

See CHAPIN on B8



Newsday Photo / Ken Spencer



Newsday Photo / K'n Spencer



Hear Harry Chapin's music and get links to related Web sites at www.newsday.com/features.

Stewards of His Legacy

CHAPIN from B6

ton. Chapin was on the board of directors and raised tens of thousands of dollars for the group. He talked louder, walked faster, laughed harder and crammed more work into a day than anybody most people had ever met. He convinced others that they could do more, too.

Needelman considers herself part of the extended Chapin family. "Harry told me that I don't have to end world hunger, that I just have to end one person's hunger, and then I've made a difference," she said. "I am just a small example of people working, 22 years after he died, on issues that he cared so deeply about. Harry convinced me that I could really make a difference."

Making a difference starts early in the family, said Tom Chapin, tuning his guitar before starting his stint as master of ceremonies at the World Hunger Year dinner.

"The kids are born with a very clear idea of social justice, what's fair," said the singer, a WHY board member. "Why does the CEO get \$250 million and the worker gets laid off? That's not fair. This is, in many ways, an old-fashioned American family because we believe that you just fight and make noise for justice."

About 10 years ago, a huge hemlock died in Tom Chapin's backyard in Rockland County in the Hudson River Valley. "I was crushed," he said. "What was I going to do? Well, we did nothing, and the rest of the trees grew up around it. That's what our children are doing. The next generation is filling in."

It's not just the blood relatives. "We're plugged in with a lot of good people who are working to change the world in the face of dark times," said Tom Chapin, a two-time Grammy winner whose 10th family recording, "Making Good Noise," has just been released. "It takes a whole community."

Judy Collins and Bill Ayres, 62, of Huntington Station, are part of the noisy crowd. Collins is an old friend of the Chapin family. Ayres, a former priest and eternal rock fan, co-founded World Hunger Year with Harry Chapin in 1975 and is executive director of the Manhattan-based organization. Ayres hosts a call-in advice show on WPLG / 95.5, Sundays from midnight to 2 a.m.

"If Harry were alive today, he would be appalled to see that now there are over 300 food banks in this country, and that people assume that's the solution to hunger," Ayres said. "Our goal from the start was having more people with better-paying jobs with benefits, with health care, with child care — and with the government helping people to help themselves."

Collins shares the sense of outrage at the current cuts in social services nationwide because they affect the people who have the least.

"There is always hope," said Collins, sweeping one arm around the Monday night crowd. Elspeth Hart, Harry Chapin's 83-year-old mother, was there with all her grandchildren. Collins' husband, industrial designer Louis Nelson, 66, said the grandchildren carry the torch now: "The hope is the younger generation. It always is."

Harry Chapin would be 60 now. He died before the video age, less than a month before MTV was launched. "When my dad was alive, they didn't make videos of singles and records," said his daughter Jen. "His music won't go away, but think of the difference he might have made on MTV."

Chapin's signature song, "Cat's in the Cradle," still gets played about five times a week on WALK / 97.5 FM. "If anybody's playing Harry Chapin anymore, that's the song they're playing," said Rob Miller, program director of the Long Island radio station.

Chapin's youngest child, Josh, now 30, was 8 when his dad died. The youngster wore his soccer uniform to the burial in the Huntington Rural Cemetery on July 21, 1981. Josh has grown up with his dad's grin, curly hair and wide eyes. Sandy Chapin refers to her youngest son as "the spitting image" of Harry. The son, a writer, has studied all his father's music and knows every word of every song, published and unpublished.

"I haven't found the niche that everyone else in the family has, in terms of jobs that echo the social activism," Josh Chapin said. "My dad was a tremendous life force and a mountain of charisma. I have people come up to me and start shaking and want to cry because I look like him. He probably touched them on the shoulder for three seconds and changed their life somehow."

At least five people who knew Harry Chapin have told his widow over the years that they had been to a medium to try to talk to a dead brother or father — and that Harry had come barging into the conversation from the other side.

"It's all very believable that he would need to be heard," Sandy Chapin said. "He wants to say that he's thinking about us and to say hello, so he breaks through whenever he gets a chance."

The tall troubadour's spirit still makes joyful noise through the big, loud family he left behind.

"My dad had an amazing energy about him. It was the best kind, but I guess some people said he was a pain in the —," Josh Chapin said. He flashed his father's grin. "If I lived life at the pace he did, I might take a long nap and stop bothering people, but I guess it makes sense that his spirits still have energy." ■