

New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

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FROM OUR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

BERNICE MACDONALD & The New York Public Library “the only place, the only library”

Below are edited excerpts from Bernice MacDonald's oral history tapes, covering the early years of her career. These tapes are part of the NYPL Retirees Association's Oral History Project. A description of the Project appears later in this newsletter.

My years at the Library were from 1952 to 1996, and those years were divided into two parts. The first 14 years, I served as an adult specialist librarian in many branches in the Bronx and Manhattan, starting as a beginning librarian and progressing from senior, to supervising, and, as many people did, to branch librarian in 1959. Then, in 1967, I began working in a system-wide capacity as Coordinator of Adult Service and, from 1975 until 1996, as Deputy Director. The last half of 1996, I served as Acting Director of the Library's 85 branch libraries.

Back to the beginning, I was strongly impressed, I remember, with the number of outstanding pioneering librarians. Of course, anyone in NYPL – and librarians in general – would know the name of

Anne Carroll Moore, the first Superintendent of Work with Children. In fact, I shook her hand. She was in her 90s and had retired, but she would keep reappearing in the Trustees Room for special receptions. Margaret Scoggin was another name known to all for her work as an early founder of services to young adults. Even as a beginning librarian, you were brought into close contact with these and other inspiring leaders through meetings, training seminars, and committee work.



When I came to The New York Public Library, it seemed as though it was the only place, the only library, to come to. It's how I think others felt when they graduated from library school. You possibly considered Philadelphia, maybe Boston, but New York and the Library were where many new professionals wanted to be.

In 1952, women in professions were still comparatively new, but the library supervisors I encountered were from the 1920s, '30s, and '40s, when even fewer women became professionals and, even then, were generally found only in nursing, teaching, social work, and librarianship. So, these women were the pioneers of library service, not only in NYPL, but also in public libraries across the country. They were confident, ready to do anything that needed doing to meet the needs of the people in neighborhoods: develop citizenship programs for immigrants, place foreign-language-speaking staff in ethnic neighborhoods, influence publishers for better children's books, and establish special collections for specific constituents. Examples of these were the Picture Collection, established for New York City's advertising, arts, fashion, and publishing industries; and the music and theater collections, which eventually became Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. I think, in retrospect, these early library leaders set the stage for successful public library service in the 20th century. The mission was clear.

In this heady atmosphere, I was sent to the Bronx and assigned to the bookmobile and various branches and sub-branches. Sub-branches – a terrible name – were often dismal, inadequate, but warmly appreciated, places, and they were the forerunners of many new full-service branches, each one established after years of community and Library struggle for budget support.

Who wouldn't remember working on a bookmobile? There was the daily inspiration you received from the welcome of people of all ages waiting at each stop. I will always remember the story the supervisor told

me about the time at the beginning of WWII when she had to explain at each stop that the bookmobile would not come again until after the war. She was particularly worried about one Tuesday stop, where a young, serious reader always came, rain or shine. The supervisor told me she took special care that last Tuesday to explain to the young girl that, because all the gas and tires were needed for the war effort, the bookmobile would not be back until after the war. The little girl asked, "Will it come back the Tuesday after the war?"

Another early assignment was to the Readers' Advisers Office. It was in the Main Library, and I remember being thrilled to walk in and out of the building each day and to explore the Research Collections. Jennie Flexner founded the Readers' Advisers Office, I believe in the late 1920s, and it flourished in the '40s, particularly when men returning from war received information and guidance for courses of study. When I was there as a beginning librarian, I indexed courses from NYC schools of adult education such as Y's, labor unions, and continuing education departments of colleges and universities. We helped walk-ins and took calls from branches seeking this information for their readers. We also prepared short bibliographies. I did one over the phone, I remember, for John Steinbeck: three or four titles on Russia.

As a Senior Librarian assigned to Yorkville on East 79th Street, I found a well-ordered branch supervised by Miss Emily Davis. (She was "Mrs." in her private life, but she, like a number of early librarians proud of their professional status, kept her two lives quite separate.) The neighborhood and the staff seemed very happy with one another. The live-in custodian and the staff, under Miss Davis's high standards, made everything run smoothly. There was no talking among staff in public areas because full attention was to be on the readers. Miss Davis – always in hat and gloves on the street – attended monthly meetings of the Yorkville Civic Council and was a presence in the

An Introduction to the Oral History Project

An interesting project on the agenda of the Retirees Association is the compilation of oral histories of longtime staff. It is an opportunity for members who worked from the 1950s up to the recent past to share the experiences they had and the changes they saw over a long period of NYPL history.

A number of tapes already had been recorded, transcribed, and stored for future use. It took some time to see what was needed to move the project along, with the most obvious need being to upgrade from audio tapes to digital recordings. We have now done that.

We have a list of questions to give direction to the conversation and get participants started. Topics like the introduction of technology and how it changed our daily work life, budget crises, the strategic planning process, and the introduction of the union could all be of interest to future librarians or historians. And we don't want to forget more everyday events, like high tea breaks or electronic time sheets.

In order to give a broad picture of life at NYPL, participants will be sought from a variety of age specialties, job categories, and departments. If you would like to participate as an interviewee, please contact Becky Koppelman at blekopp@gmail.com, or (212) 874-6199.

community. Although not quite "East Side," being too far east, the branch had a bit of elegance, with its warm dark woodwork and polished brass knobs outside and in. Children's classes came regularly from both public and private schools. Users ranged from wealthy to very poor, but, generally, the neighborhood was solidly middle-class. It was the 1950s when a policeman would stop by to chat, and sidewalks were hosed daily. A big event in those early years was my introduction to book selection. As a Senior First Assistant – and after working almost a year with the readers and the collection – I accompanied Miss Davis to the Book Selection Room in the Main Library. As I first looked into the room, I remember thinking, "This is the inner sanctum." It was a narrow, dimly-lit but very attractive room with eight or so cubicles and one arm-chair at each. The twenty-or-so books in each section had reviews clipped to them from Virginia Kirkus, ALA's Booklist, and other sources, along with an order slip. I sat next to Miss Davis and was shown how to examine each book

quickly and efficiently. (The schedule permitted only two hours to make decisions on approximately 160 books.) We had with us, for guidance, a list of new titles that readers had requested. In addition to reading the reviews, we had to determine if each book in question could be re-bound (at least one-inch margins), if the print was readable, and if the publisher was reliable. But, most of all, we had to know if each book would be right for our readers, our collection, and our budget. I walked away from that experience feeling drained from the intensity of actually buying about 30 books and hearing Miss Davis say over and over, "Every neighborhood is different." I distinctly remember that phrase because, on subsequent assignments, at Seward Park on the Lower East Side, Countee Cullen in Harlem, and Grand Concourse in the Bronx, I found myself repeating it and nodding silently in agreement that each neighborhood was different, very different.

Yorkville, the first Carnegie branch in the system, had the usual high staircases. One flight was to the second-floor Children's Room and another went up to the third floor, which housed the custodian's apartment and two other important destinations: the staff room and a studio for recording books for the blind, a precursor to the Andrew Heiskell Library Braille and Talking Book Library.

To get to the staff room, each staff member gladly hurried up those stairs everyday for "afternoon tea." It was a formal affair with places set at the table; the tea pot, sugar, and milk carefully laid out; and some small sweet, like cookies, unless it was someone's birthday. Then it was cake and candles. There was also an established code: a real effort at making general, topical conversation; no gossip, no long silences, and, especially, no complaining of any kind. Each staff member had a week of "tea chairmanship" and shopped for supplies at the Coffee Roasting Establishment. It was a heavenly place a couple of blocks south and east, with old wooden counters and floors and large tin containers of loose tea and coffee.

One of the most exciting times for me was being a part of the opening of the new Grand Concourse Branch Library. The subway stop was 174th Street, and the branch was just off the Grand Concourse behind Bronx Lebanon Hospital. The community was so overjoyed at the prospect of their new library and so eager for it to open that we had a hard time getting on with the amount of work a new branch required. People would be all around the outside, stopping us as we entered and left, knocking on the windows to smile or talk to us, and slipping paper messages to us. It was endearing. But I do remember that we had a fierce deadline and we were racing all over those new split levels to meet it. I was standing on the Grand Concourse waiting to cross one morning when I heard one woman ahead of me telling another about the library, "It's so beautiful, I shouldn't tell you!" And that was the reception we found when we opened our doors in 1958. They thought the library was beautiful and we were beautiful. It was a reading public like

none other. They read everything we had and pushed us for more, expanding and deepening our collection. They attended our programs in capacity numbers. The branch had a small auditorium (about 50 chairs) with a stage. We were open four nights a week and had a full range of programs: plays, music, documentary films, and book discussions. Using every resource in the City, especially the Musicians Union (Local 802) Fund, we were able to book top groups such as the Emerson String Quartet and excellent small jazz groups. A favorite documentary film was Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*, and our book discussion groups flourished. We ran two of them: Great Books and Exploring the American Idea. One night, while I was leading a discussion of Aristotle with a mixed group of about 15 adults, the question centered on the importance of family. During the quiet, thoughtful discussion, an elderly couple suddenly said that if they had it to do over again, they wouldn't have children because life was a vale of tears. Then, a middle-aged couple said they had children because it was their only chance for immortality. With each of these comments dropping into the silence like another shoe, a very young couple said they planned to have a child because it would be one more person to love. I felt stunned by the depth of honesty we had reached, and the memory of that discussion has stayed locked in my mind.

Another time, something similar occurred at the front desk. I realized that the very large and talkative crowd waiting to charge out books was unusually quiet. I walked around trying to figure out the problem when one reader I knew guided my eyes to the Reserve shelf behind the desk. There, we had just lined up ten copies or more of William Shirer's *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*. If you remember, the book was very large with a black cover. The spine had a large white circle with a black swastika in it. It could be said that the sight of it actually chilled the spine of the readers who saw it. We immediately turned the books around, and things settled back right away.



With the Director of the Kalamazoo Public Library during an ALA literacy study

It was extraordinary to me that, when Co-Op City opened, our Grand Concourse readers moved there seemingly en masse. From the top-circulation branch in the system during some months, we dropped to below average in a very short time. This is really not at all extraordinary in the City, but, at the time, I was amazed, and I knew I would never again love a group of readers as much.

Up until the time I left Grand Concourse to become Coordinator of Adult Services in 1967, the staff was essentially made up of librarians, clerks, and pages. Then a strong Central Administration was starting to be developed. By the 1980s we had changed, as many organizations had, from a cultural to a corporate model of operation. A series of non-librarian presidents began to head the Library; lawyers were

added for the first time; and human resources, fund raising, public relations, budget, and technology departments were quickly developed to meet the complexities of the times. When I became the Coordinator of Adult Services around the beginning of these more frantic years, we not only had the exciting opportunities brought by the War on Poverty and the Library Services and Construction Act, but we also had the first City assault on the library budgets, resulting in the first layoffs in the history of the Library. It was traumatic.

IMPRESARIO

Shortly after he retired, Alan Pally was invited by the Dance Critics Association to write about his work producing dance programs at the Performing Arts Library. The following are excerpts from the article, which was published in the Spring 2011 issue of DCA News. If you would like a copy of the full article, please e-mail apally@rcn.com.

I was a wild teenager. When I was sixteen years old, my aunt, who was studying psychology, suggested to my mother that I be sent to a psychiatrist. And, so, for two years I trudged down to Tenth Street in Greenwich Village once a week to unburden myself and, presumably, to shed some of the wildness.

Forty years later, I got a call from dance historian and critic Camille Hardy, who suggested that The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts consider producing a series of programs as a memorial tribute to dance scholar Selma Jeanne Cohen. I was enthusiastic about the idea—I had seen Dr. Cohen around the Library for decades and knew of her legacy and her closeness to the institution. To plan the series, Camille and I arranged to meet at the home of Selma Jeanne’s friends, *New York Times* dance critic Jack Anderson and George Dorris. As I approached Jack and George’s block on Tenth Street, I thought, “This looks awfully familiar.” When I got to the building, I realized that not only was it the same building in which I had seen my shrink 40 years earlier, but Jack and George’s flat was also the exact apartment that had been his office! And the very room in which I tried to express my teenage angst was now Jack Anderson’s bedroom!

I began working at The New York Public Library in 1967, while I was in college, studying history of religions. After working, mostly part-time, at several NYPL units (Donnell, Central Circulation, Science & Technology Division, Yorkville), I went up to the Performing Arts Library in 1972. There I worked on a

variety of projects related to public programs and exhibitions. Between 1972 and 1990, I had no input into the selection of programs but handled arrangements after the artists had been booked. One of my many roles was to play the sound cues for dance programs, and I have vivid memories of graceful septuagenarians, such as Eugene Von Grona and Flower Hujer, gliding across the stage. I also remember performances by the beautiful and talented Glory Van Scott; the Philippine Dance Company of New York, which was run by my colleague Reynaldo Alejandro; occasional Indian dancers; and a few small, local dance companies. One series, not characteristic of those years, took place in 1977/78 and consisted of four screenings of “rare, unusual, and new films from the Dance Collection, with introduction and commentary by distinguished critics.”

The New York Public Library has been presenting free public programs for more than 100 years. When the Performing Arts Library opened in 1965, most public programs shared certain attributes: They celebrated the performing arts; admission was free; and artists donated their time. For the first 25 years, that is, from 1965-1990, artists/lecturers would submit tapes or resumés for consideration and might be booked for the series. Around 1990, when I became head of programming, I changed the process. I felt that, as an institution of international repute, our programs should be actively curated, that we should start from an idea and build programs, reaching out to artists and academics who had the expertise we required and asking them to donate their time. I’ve always felt that we needed to keep to the same standard as our sister institutions at Lincoln Center.

In his obituary of Selma Jeanne Cohen, published in *The New York Times* on December 16, 2005, Jack Anderson wrote, “Ms. Cohen waged a tireless campaign against scholars who maintained that dance was inherently frivolous. Instead, she believed it had

a rich history that could be fruitfully analyzed from many philosophical viewpoints.”

I had been aware, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, that a few of my colleagues elsewhere in NYPL felt that our building at Lincoln Center was about entertainment and frivolity and that our disciples did not warrant the same scholarly examination as the subjects represented in the venerable chambers in the Forty-Second Street Library. And so I took Selma Jeanne’s mission as my own.

In early 1987, thanks, I believe, first to the foresight of Genevieve Oswald, the Dance Collection’s Founding Curator, and, later, to the enthusiasm of her successor, Madeleine Nichols, the Library inaugurated a series of collaborations with the Dance Critics Association, which resulted in several multi-faceted symposia that combined lectures, discussions, performances, and screenings. At that time, Joan Canale, the Library’s head of public programs, was busy with space rentals. It fell to me to work closely with the organizers of the symposia. Over the next few years, working with Jonnie Green and the DCA, I learned how dance—and other subjects covered by the Performing Arts Library—“could be fruitfully analyzed from many philosophical viewpoints.” I also met many of the dance critics and scholars whose arms I was to twist shamelessly for the next 20 years.

The daunting challenge of producing public programs in the field of dance in The New York Public Library



Alan Pally with diva Jessye Norman and Arthur Mitchell, founding co-director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, March 2009

is that, in an institution with many world-class collections, the Dance Division is unique. Originally a small part of the Music Division, the Dance Division established the gold standard and is now the world’s largest and most comprehensive archive devoted to the documentation of dance. (And despite the importance of the film and video collection, one should not minimize the foundation on which the Division was built: iconography, manuscripts, books, clipping and program files, audio oral histories, and other treasures.) I wanted our series of public

programs to aspire to be as unique as the Dance Division, to show that a series of public programs in our library could be both world-class on the one hand and totally noncommercial on the other.

One method I developed to ensure that dance was addressed equally in public programs was to undertake a thematic approach, to select themes that could be explored from the perspectives of dance, music, and theater. The first theme I chose was the performing arts of Asia.

The first Performing Arts of Asia Festival (1993) included 25 programs, seven of which were lectures or performances related to dance. I'm proud that during my watch, I believe the number of dance programs in the Asian festival alone in any given year exceeded the total number of dance programs for any year prior to my having become head of public programs. Also in the early '90s, I decided that the time was right to focus on the Performing arts of newly democratic Poland. In 1994, I organized "Performing Arts and Artists of Poland," a festival which featured a month of performances, panels, lectures, and screenings, as well as donations of major collections to the Performing Arts Library. In later years, I produced series focusing on the arts of Romania, Spain, Norway, Mexico, the Philippines, France, Haiti, the United Kingdom, and many other countries.

It is difficult to give a truly comprehensive picture of the dance programming I produced during my 20 years as head of public programs, but a few of the hundreds of dance personages who appeared include Merce Cunningham, Katherine Dunham, Suzanne Farrell, Allegra Kent, Lar Lubovitch, Jerry Mitchell, and Peter Martins. I cannot name all the colleagues—on and off the staff—who provided guidance and support, but I must mention Jan Schmidt and my extraordinary former assistant, Aram Tchobanian, both of whom will no doubt continue to encourage dance events of the highest quality. I changed the

Performing Arts Library's public programs in 1990 when I took over the department; no doubt it will change again, now that I have retired. I'm gratified that much of what I produced has been audio or videotaped for the archives.

I retired in early 2010. I'm particularly pleased that my final year at the Library—calendar 2009—contained a rich mosaic of dance programs featuring old and new friends in the dance world. The success of the series has never been about money, nor was the lack of funds ever a deterrent. It was about imagination, education, and negotiation—that's how we've managed to corral some of the busiest artists and academics to participate in our series. Nor was it about metrics. Although, for many years, public programs brought in thousands of people annually, second only to the Circulating Library, our main goal was not numbers but the bringing in of new audiences and the creation of an awareness of and appreciation for the Library and its collections. I was always fully conscious of the fact that the most important work of the institution takes place at the Reference Desk. And, although I produced NYPL's first Webcast of a public program, as well as symposia on the uses of the Internet for cultural institutions, I still believe that. During my 20 years as head of public programs at the Performing Arts Library, I've had the extraordinary good fortune to work with many of the greatest talents in dance, music, and theater. But the greatest joy has always been bringing people together, making connections, and celebrating our shared history.



Alan with Natasha Richardson and Michael Sheen, who appeared in an April 2007 theater program “Looking Back on John Osborne” (Photo: Vanessa Redgrave)

Although Alan tries never to leave his apartment before noon, he continues to produce the occasional public program. In October 2010, working with the Art History faculty at NYU, he produced a symposium on Alfred Stieglitz, as part of a series related to a Stieglitz exhibition at the Seaport Museum. In November, at the Players Club, he curated a program of readings about Uta Hagen, for HB Studio, the drama school founded by Uta's husband, Herbert Berghof. Also for HB Studio, he is working on a tribute to Eric Bentley and David Hyde Pierce, which will take place in November 2011. Alan has been recently appointed to the Board

of Directors of the HB Playwrights Foundation and also serves as a Trustee of the Noël Coward Foundation, which does necessitate leaving his flat early a few times a year, as he prefers the morning flight to London. In conjunction with an exhibition on Noël Coward which will take place at the Performing Arts Library in Spring 2012, Alan will be lecturing at LPA on June 4, 2012. He is on the committee to organize the 2012 conference of the Dance Critics Association, which will take place at the 92nd Street Y, and also enjoys reading 19th and early 20th century Comparative Religions texts on his iPad.

NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings to All!

Our weather here on the East Coast has been very unsettling, with extremely hot temperatures in July and the tremors of an earthquake in August. Then came Hurricane Irene and its aftermath, which caused major devastation, flooding, and power outages. And tropical storms continue to deluge the City and surrounding areas. It is wet and gloomy. Enough!

But what's been happening in the Library? Last February, our City libraries were facing a 29% budget cut. But we received good news from Christine Quinn, City Council Speaker, when the Council restored \$83 million in funding to the Adopted Budget /Fiscal Year 2012. This means the three Library systems should be able to avoid staff layoffs and library closings. Most neighborhood branches will be open five days a week, with patrons continuing to have access to books, media, job training, and other critical resources. (If you are interested in receiving "issue-based email up-dates" from the NY City Council, you can sign up at www.council.nyc.gov, a wonderful source of important information.)

NYPL continues to develop its plans for a new central library system. We have heard that Donnell Library Center has been sold, the Annex is to be sold soon, and parts of the Science, Industry and Business Library (SIBL) are in the process of being sold. The Church Pension Group, which is purchasing SIBL, will convert the space into offices for their employee benefits operations, and NYPL will rent office space from them. SIBL will still exist but will relocate staff and materials to other spaces. Sounds confusing, but we will keep you informed as we receive more news regarding these plans.

Did you know that when you are 65 years of age or older NYPL offers a senior discount for overdue materials? You have to go into your branch with your

library card to have your status changed. Other library systems have this policy, too.

Here in the Metropolitan area, we retirees have been quite busy. In March we had two entertaining programs sponsored by the NYC Department of the Aging. Harriet Stollman spoke to us about "Getting a Good Night's Sleep," which included simple exercise demonstrations for keeping us active and fit. Very important for seniors!

TimeBanksNYC shared the same meeting. This is a city-wide program that helps aging New Yorkers network to help each other with simple services, such as grocery shopping, dog walking, or pick-up after a medical procedure. The organization hopes to make this approach workable across the US. So stay tuned.

We took "Centennial Tours" of the exhibit, "Celebrating 100 Years." The exhibit contained only treasures from the extensive NYPL collections and celebrated the 1911 opening of the Main Building at 42nd Street and 5th Avenue, now known as the Stephen A. Schwarzman building. It contained not only rare books, but numerous magnificent and fascinating items: the Gutenberg Bible, Virginia Woolf's walking stick, Malcolm X's journals and leather satchel, and many more wonderful items of historical significance. The tours were excellent.

Our season was completed with a grand tour of The Morgan Library and Museum and the June "Spring Reunion" for longtime Staff and Retirees sponsored by Human Resources. We ended our activities with summer baseball games at Staten Island's Richmond County Ballpark and MCU Park in Coney Island. Good times for all.

Great news! This year the Retirees Association will have a Staten Island representative who will be planning programs and excursions on Staten Island for all. Her name is Emily Cohen, and she is eager to speak with those of you who live on SI. If you haven't heard from Emily yet, please give her a call at 718-984-3790, or email her at ecohennypl@aol.com.

Her mailing address is 473 Jefferson Blvd., Staten Island, NY, 10312. She welcomes your input and would like your help.

Please Save The Date: On Wednesday, October 19, 2011, we will have our first membership meeting at 1:30 pm on the 6th floor of the Mid-Manhattan Library. Our special guest will be Robert Sink, retired NYPL Archivist. Bob is doing research on the branch librarians (mostly women) who headed neighborhood branches of NYPL from 1901 – 1950. It promises to be a great program. If you want to check out Bob's Blog, it is <http://nypl-librarians.blogspot.com>

There's nothing like talking to fellow retirees to get one happy and involved again. Forget the weather. We are an active, lively bunch, and we've got things to do and more planning to take care of, the same as each of you. The members of the Executive Committee, Members-at-Large, and I wish you all a terrific year! And please keep in touch; send in your News Sheet contributions. Remember, everyone loves to hear from you! Enjoy your Newsletter!

Becky Eakins Koppelman

NEWS FROM THE TOTAL REWARDS OFFICE

New Human Resources Structure: As we mentioned in our update at the beginning of the year, Human Resources (formerly Staff Services) at NYPL has undergone some exciting changes. The Benefits Office is now known as the Total Rewards Office. In addition, we are happy to introduce the HR Service Center to you. The HR Service Center has been doing a wonderful job of handling requests for information, processing enrollments, and fielding questions for active staff since March. Beginning in October, the Service Center will be the first point of contact for



Becky Koppelman

retirees as well. To contact the HR Service Center with a request, you can email them at HRServiceCenter@nypl.org or call them at [212-621-0500](tel:212-621-0500) prompt 4.

Medicare B Reimbursements: This is a reminder that the deadline to file for Medicare Part B reimbursement for 2010 is December 31, 2011. If you retired from a union position, your reimbursement application and payment comes from DC-37. All questions regarding reimbursement for union retirees should be directed to DC-37's Medicare Reimbursement Unit at [212-815-1355](tel:212-815-1355).

Same-sex Marriage Tax Implications: On June 24, 2011 the New York State Legislature passed the Marriage Equality Act. As of July 24, 2011, same-sex

couples wishing to marry under this law can apply for a marriage license. The Marriage Equality Act “formally recognizes otherwise-valid marriages without regard to whether the parties are of the same or different sex.” Though federal taxation will not be affected by this New York State legislation, there will be an effect on NY State and local tax, therefore, health and supplemental benefits will no longer be subject to taxation at a state or city level. If you cover a domestic partner on your health and/or supplemental benefits and you are currently married or plan to become married, please contact Lisa Kirsch at lisakirsch@nypl.org.

RETIREE NEWS

BARBARA ALPER & EDMOND FURSA

Barbara Alper and Edmond Fursa continue to enjoy their retirement. Barbara is beginning her second year and Edmond his fourth year of retirement in the go-go stage. In 2010, they were busy with bridge lessons, bird watching, wine and cheese classes, and pilates (for Barbara), with other exercise as well. They traveled to the Finger Lakes for wine tasting and to Tanglewood with Elderhostel, staying with Peter McCallion, an excellent host. They spent a week on the Jersey shore with Barbara’s whole family: two kids under three, two nephews and spouses and her brothers. Edmond’s niece was married in Roslyn, New York, in August. This made a great excuse to do the wineries of the North Fork of Long Island. In between, they had some Restaurant Week meals with Barbara Berliner, Donna Abbaticchio, Ed and Carol Breheny, and Jim Egan. They traveled to Chicago for Barbara’s cousin’s daughter’s bat mitzvah over the Columbus Day weekend. The weather was balmy, and they had a great family get-together. The year 2010 ended with their “traditional” holiday party, sing-along carols at Newark Cathedral, Lessons and Carols in Ossining, and New Year’s Eve dinner in a great

THE LIBRARY Dedicated to our Pages

**Aisles of knowledge, escape and wonder
Readers and readers from way out yonder**

**Red-blue-green and yellow books
Sophisticated, exasperated and tired looks**

QUESTIONS...QUESTIONS...QUESTIONS

**Questions that bored us
Others that awed us**

**Questions from heaven and questions from hell!
Questions as deep, as deep as a, well...**

**Let’s just say
You could spend a day...**

**Questions that made us think a lot
Others that made us drink a lot**

**Everyone knows what these walls have seen
The good, the bad, the tired and mean**

**Who here doesn’t want a place in the sun?
And just the right book will get the job done!**

**Stacks upon stacks from years of collecting
Wonderful treasures worth reflecting
Upon the honor of walking these halls
Certainly headier than shopping malls**

**Books and brass and wooden carvings
Free to all—even the starving
Hungry for food, comfort, knowledge and more...
Who knows what great minds come through our door?**

**Now a library awaits us with a brand new face
But let’s never forget this old, dusty place,**

**Missionaries to the truth, we’ll continue in strife
For wisdom, for culture, for a better life.**

Jackie (Coqui) Lavalle

local restaurant! On to 2011, with a trip to Germany to visit Barbara's nephew who's doing post-doctorate work in Dresden.

DAVID BEASLEY

I continue writing and publishing. For information about my books, please see www.davuspublishing.com. I still play tennis and some squash. Michelle and I traveled over six weeks in Europe last fall. We went on a literary tour of Ireland in June. Cruising has been and will be an increasingly attractive way of seeing the world as we grow older.

MICHAEL CALVANO

I retired from my position as Chief of Photographic Services at the NYPL Research Libraries after nearly forty years of service, 1949-1989. Subsequently, I indulged my interest and longtime hobby by studying horticulture and then working on Long Island at Hicks Nursery, one of the oldest garden centers in the country. In 1994, my wife Margaret (we met at NYPL in 1956) received an offer to work as an Information Center Director in the District of Columbia area, requiring a move to Maryland. We are now both retired and live in the lovely state capital city of Annapolis. This historical city of 50,000, home to the U.S. Naval Academy and to St. John's College (established 1696), provides many interesting opportunities. A number of accomplished artists have made their home here, some as resident artists at Maryland Hall for the Arts, while others exhibit their works in the numerous art galleries. We feel fortunate to have serendipitously "dropped anchor" here in the sailing capital of the world, though we have never done any sailing.

WILLIAM LEO COAKLEY

I have read my poems at art galleries, including the BoxoFFICE Gallery this spring, and at the Barnes & Noble bookstore in Union Square as part of an annual W. B. Yeats Society award program. I also talked on Montréal's CKUT "Labour Radio" on the anniversary



Harriet Stollman telling us about "Getting a Good Night's Sleep"

of the horrendous Shirtwaist Factory Fire. Editor's note: Mr. Coakley won honorable mention in the poetry competition of the Yeats Society.

MARY ANNE CORRIER

I've spent the last six months traveling to family weddings. It seems 2011 became the marrying year for the family's next generation.

In January, my cousin Rob married a woman from Plaquemine Parish in a traditional Roman Catholic Church ceremony followed by a traditional Cajun wedding reception. Fabulous food combined with plenty of toasting. Circle dances and a money dance preceded a second line in which the band and all the guests escorted the wedding couple to their car.

In May, my goddaughter Ellen married her deep-sea-diver love, Ric, in a ceremony under oak trees in Audubon Park in New Orleans. Ellen, the former

elephant keeper at the Audubon Zoo, had favorite elephant, Ponja, as one of her attendants. A reception followed the ceremony at the “camp” in the zoo’s swamp exhibit. It didn’t rain, the food was great, Ponja got a treat of hot dog buns.

Over Memorial Day weekend I was off to Newport, Rhode Island, for the wedding of my godson, Donnie, and his California love, Valerie. They were married outdoors at a site overlooking Narragansett Bay. The reception followed at the Boathouse as the sun set over the bay. Donnie had arranged for the family to stay on a refitted lighthouse tender moored in Newport Harbor. We all had a great time.

In June I put away my wedding finery.

Leo Schreiner, former Staten Island Community Specialist and Great Kills Branch Librarian, writes from Oregon that he retired April 2011. He had been City Librarian in Tillamook, Oregon, since leaving NYPL.

DOROTHY EOSEFOW

I haven’t been doing much since my health is not getting better but is at a standstill. I watch TV, most especially the Religion (Catholic) Channel. We have an eight-month-old grandchild, a girl, Jayde, and a twelve year old, Mathew, who makes me happy and is good therapy. I have had my caregiver Chan for twenty-six years now. Most of my friends from NYPL have passed on and the few that are left communicate with me occasionally.

MARIE FERRIGNO

My niece made me very happy this last Christmas. She gave me a Kindle. What fun! I keep Amazon.com busy searching for books. I want to enter in this fabulous new adult toy.

PATRICK HARDISH

My mom passed away at the age of ninety-one on March 3, 2010, a big loss for me. I had become her

caregiver after she had a stroke in 2002. My two songs for soprano voice and piano (“A Valediction” and “Before I Wake”) were performed in concert at the Chelsea Art Museum on June 9, 2010. My “Solo for Pete” (for drum set) was released last year (2010) on the Composers Concordance Records CD *Ballets & Solos*. I attended the Music Library Association’s annual meeting last February in Philadelphia. I am currently composing a work for organ to be premiered at Harvard University.

JAMES HUFFMAN, JR.

For the past several months, I have been recovering from a serious fracture of the foot requiring surgery and rehabilitation. I’m looking forward to resuming a full and active retirement schedule in the spring. I hope to participate in Harlem’s National Black Theater’s program which introduces incarcerated teens to theater and the arts.

EVELYN S. JONES

Traveling has been put off presently because of personal and family responsibilities. I hope to resume soon. A trip is in the making for the near future. I am a member of the Countee Cullen Library Support Group and, of course, a volunteer. We are all sad at this time because of the death of the chairperson.

LYDIA LA FLEUR

I went on a splendid trip to South Africa in November (my granddaughter Sarah was working there), including a safari where I saw, roaming freely, all the wild animals except the lion—I couldn’t get up at dawn.

I am still involved with our community theater and performed recently in the reading of a play written by one of our co-op tenants. I gave a reading recently at Brooklyn Borough Hall of one of my autobiographical stories at an awards ceremony for artistic groups and individual artists in New York City. Currently I am writing for our “Writing from Life Experience” workshop about my career with The



Harriet Stollman leads retirees in a series of health promoting exercises.

New York Public Library. It is surprising to me how much I remember now that I'm focusing on it.

JACQUELINE LAVALLE

Currently, I'm studying percussion: conga, bongo, Bomba y Plena. Drumming is my passion, along with books, of course. I have had so many wonderful, funny, poignant experiences working in NYPL. I promise to write about them in the future.

ALMA LINDSEY

I started at the Special Investigator Office, Room 222 at the 42nd Street building, in November 1958. Then I went to Central Circulation, Room 80. In the 1960's I worked at Donnell Adult until my 1975 retirement.

STEPHEN LIKOSKY

I've been keeping busy these days in a variety of ways. I volunteer once a week as a cataloger for the art collection at Leslie-Lohman Gallery in Soho. Also, I am continuing a hobby I've had since childhood, collecting antique postcards. Most of the articles I write regarding the cards can be found on the BLOG

at metropostcard.com. Titles include "Jessie Tarbox Beals's Greenwich Village," "The War to End All Wars," and "The Displaying of Africans at European World Exhibitions." Travel continues to be a passion. Two or three times a year I go off on an adventure. Otherwise, lots of reading, meeting friends for lunch, wandering about the city, and going to the gym.

WOL SUE LEE

I have participated in and completed the four-week health training from the City of New York, Department of Aging given at the Kips Bay Branch. I am looking forward to working with the public.

RAYMOND MARKEY

I am glad to hear the Retirees Association is fighting hard to protect our pensions. Needless to say, life in sunny Hawaii would not be possible without it.



Karen Martin and Melody Ross pose with our president after telling us about Time Banks

ANNE MOY

I go to an exercise class twice a week, do crossword puzzles, volunteer at a tenants' organization, and create poems.

MARCIA OSOFSKY

I am still in the process of organizing my time and living space. My interests include films, mysteries, and museums.

I enjoyed my eleven years at Telephone Reference. Our staff was under the excellent guidance of Harriet Shalat who has a sense of humor and curiosity about a range of subjects. We functioned as a team of answer-seeking detectives.

MARIE M. PROCTOR

For several years my address has been Hightstown, New Jersey. It is not really my address. Hightstown and East Windsor are next door and use the same post office. "Hightstown" mail always reaches me, but I vote only in East Windsor. We are trying to straighten everything out now.

SHARON RUBIN

I am so busy since I retired. I am caring for my ninety-four-year-old mom: walking with her, shopping with her, eating with her, playing Scrabble with her, and laughing with her. She draws the line when I want to read *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. However, I am really in luck because my seven-, four-, and two-year-old grandchildren always want another story. Hooray, once a children's librarian, always a children's librarian!

HARRIET SHALAT

After a couple of months of visiting family and friends in Denver and just relaxing, I've been volunteering fairly often at Women for Afghan Women, helping women prepare for their citizenship tests. They're all serious students and can't wait to become American citizens. I'm also slowly updating the online Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia, which is on the Jewish Women's Archive website. And I'm still doing a lot of relaxing and hanging out with friends.

ROBERT SHEEHAN

I just returned from my twentieth winter in Mexico. Love it! No snow!

KARLAN SICK

Serving as president of the board of Literacy for Incarcerated Teens (LIT) is rewarding. We raise money for books and programs for youth in New York detention centers.

My husband was a guest lecturer in Bologna at the Johns Hopkins School. We spent six wonderful weeks in Italy and plan to repeat the experience next fall.

ZAHARA STESSEL, PhD

Our granddaughter Keshet Starr, who was admiring all those books while visiting the library with her mother, received her law degree this year.

JULIA VAN HAAFTEN

I left the Museum of the City of New York in October 2010. I'm finishing a long-underway biography of Berenice Abbott.

VIRGINIA WARNER

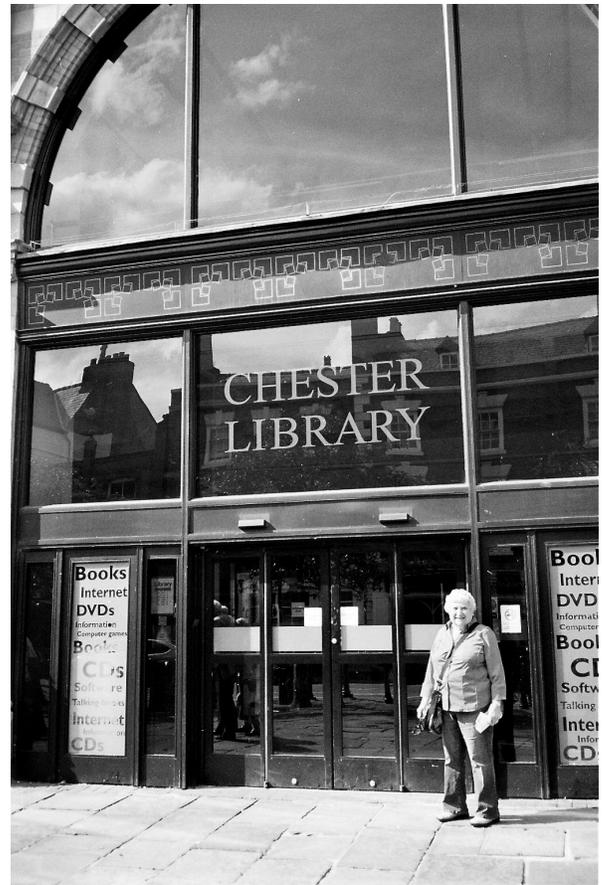
In my last note to all of you I told you that I was looking forward to a cruise in May with friends. 2010 turned out to be an experience for my family and myself. I entered the ER of the hospital on May 1, 2010, after my great-grandson's First Holy Communion. From then until October 20, 2010, I was in and out of the hospital and two nursing homes. I had some bad experiences and some very good ones. Carmel Richmond Nursing Home has a beautiful bird room that gives everyone a great deal of comfort. Every Thursday my granddaughter brought her two children and their supper. We sat on my bed and ate picnic style. Believe it or not this was fun and we all looked forward to Thursdays.

VIRGINIA WILHELM

Most of my volunteer time is taken up as a board member in my building. I live in a tenant managed building, and, since my retirement, I have on taken more responsibilities.

I am also involved with literary societies. In September I organized a Barbara Pym tea at the Church of the Incarnation. The Jane Austen Society of North America will be meeting in New York City in 2012. I have volunteered to help with the planning of this major event.

I continue to enjoy all the cultural advantages of living in New York City. There is always something interesting to do. The city offers such variety: recently I saw the Balenciaga exhibit at the Queen Sofia Spanish Institute and attended an auction of 19th century dog paintings at Bonhams Auction House. I've been to the Metropolitan Opera several times this season. The high point was Boris Godunov with Rene Pape. This summer at least three major ballet



When she travels, Estelle Friedman visits public libraries. Here she is in Chester, England.

companies will be in residence at Lincoln Center, and I'm planning to attend a lot.

ARLINE WILSON

Retirement for a workaholic? What a unique idea! Let's see: Tai Chi classes, Scrabble nights, art classes, lunch with friends, volunteering. I guess it could work. My best to all my fellow retirees.

MARIE ZWANZIGER

I recently returned from the Dordogne Valley, France.

Editor's Note: In the last issue in Pat Pardo's item, Henry George School of Social Science was mis-named as Henry George School of Social Services.

NEW MEMBERS

Miriam Castle
Steven N. Cooper
Jennie Czarny
Janice Frank
Phyllis Hoffman
Barbara Schwartz
Alexandra Lutz
Anne Seppala-Holtzman
Beth Wladis

REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES

We honor the memory of the following retirees and staff members who have died this year.

Helen Chin
Kuang-Fu Chu
Francis Joan Kirwin
Joseph A. Osina
Lisa S. Schneider
Fred Sedlacek
Sally L. Thompson

JOAN KIRWIN

From Bill Kirwin: Below is a copy of the obituary for Joannie that was published in the Scottsbluff Daily Star Herald (Scottsbluff Nebraska) where our family lived when Joan was growing up.

"Francis Joan Kirwin, daughter of W. H. "Duke" Kirwin & Ethel Kirwin, deceased, who were long time residents of Scottsbluff, died unexpectedly of a heart attack in her Manhattan, NY apartment on the 19th of March, 2011. Joan was born in North Platte on May 19, 1934. She attended Lincoln Heights grade school in Scottsbluff and St. Patrick's Academy in Sidney, Nebr. She received a masters degree in Library Science from Columbia University and

advanced degrees from NYU and Columbia. She worked in the New York Public Library system for over 40 years, retiring in 2005. She is survived by her brothers, William of Newport Beach, CA; Francis of Key West, FL and a sister Ann of Albuquerque, NM and numerous nieces and nephews. A funeral Mass was said on March 24th at the Church of Our Savior in NYC and a memorial service for Joan is planned for later in the summer.

SALLY THOMPSON

The New York Public Library: We received the sad news that retiree Sally L. Thompson passed away on Wednesday, June 1st, 2011, in Crystal, Minnesota. She had suffered from lung cancer and was living in a hospice center there.

Sally began her career at NYPL 9/1/1960 at Seward Park Branch in Manhattan. After working as Librarian in different branches, she retired as Branch Librarian at Mott Haven on 9/30/1996.

Her cousin Donald Anderson wrote "Sally loved to travel, loved the ballet and theater and enjoyed her 36 year career in the NYPL....She moved back to Minnesota in 2006 where she rented an independent living apartment....".After time her health condition deteriorated, but she kept up with as active and independent life as she could until moving to an assisted living apartment. However, she asked that no one know of her cancer until she had died.

Sally wished not to have a memorial service, but donations in her name may be made to the Disabled American Veterans, State Veterans Service Building, 3rd Floor, 20 West 12th St., St. Paul Minnesota 55155.

Mr. Anderson sent a longer letter about Sally and her later years in Minnesota. If you knew Sally and would

like a copy of his letter please contact President Becky Koppelman.

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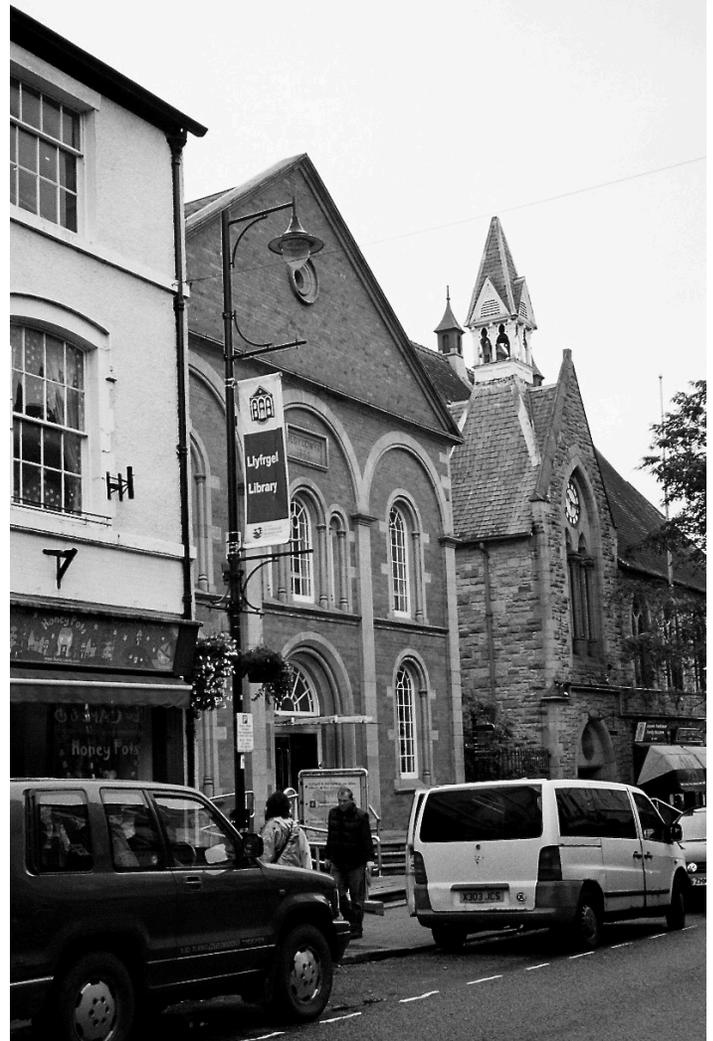
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In Wales, Estelle Friedman photographed this library that had once been a chapel.