

New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter

Winter 2012 - 2013

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TWO NYPL LIBRARIANS WITH TWO VERY DIFFERENT CAREER PATHS

STEPHAN LIKOSKY

Stephan Likosky worked for NYPL from 1980 until his retirement in 2005. While studying for his MLS, he took a course in special libraries and did research on prison librarianship. This, combined with his involvement in social activism, made the job of Prison Librarian at NYPL – as he says – “a perfect match” for him. It is the position he held during his entire career. Steve received a “World of Difference Award,” given to individuals who have “Made a Difference” in combating racial, religious and ethnic prejudice (1989) and a Ford Foundation Sloan Public Service Award, which he shared with Yolanda Bonitch in 1992. He also received a research grant from NYPL that enabled him to publish an anthology of gay and lesbian nonfiction: *Coming Out: An Anthology of International Gay and Lesbian Writings* (Pantheon, 1992). One of the significant contributions Steve made to the field of prison librarianship was the creation of the booklet, *Connections*, a guide to information sources in New York City for formerly incarcerated people, which Steve describes on page 4.

LYDIA LA FLEUR



Lydia LaFleur came to New York City from Portland, Maine, in 1952. She joined the Library in 1956 as a clerk in Preparation Services at 42nd Street but quickly went on to become a trainee at the Nathan Straus Young Adult Library. In her 32 year career, she worked at St. Agnes, 115th Street, Epiphany, and Inwood Branches, was the Vocational High School Specialist in the Office of Young Adult Services, and the Supervising Young Adult Librarian on the North Manhattan Project. Finally, she became Young Adult Borough Specialist, first on Staten Island and then in Manhattan. She retired in 1987. On the following page are her remembrances of her time at the 115th Street Branch.

LYDIA LA FLEUR

In 1958, after about six months at the St. Agnes Branch Library and after completing the young adult training seminar, I was assigned to work at the 115th Street Branch Library in Harlem, where I was to be in charge of young adult services. This was after Rosa Parks, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the desegregation of the Little Rock High School in Arkansas (enabled by the National Guard). But it was before the lunch counter sit-ins in the South, the struggle over voting rights, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act. I don't think, however, that I followed the news closely in those days. My own studies – I would get my Master's Degree later that year – and my personal life took most of my time.

115th Street Branch Library is an historic building dating from 1908 and designed by architects McKim, Mead, and White. It is one of the 67 branches built with funds from Andrew Carnegie and is located on what is now called Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard, between Seventh and Eighth Avenue – across the street from Wadleigh Junior High School. This neighborhood, as most of Harlem, had once been all white. I didn't know at the time that the actress Jean Stapleton and the writer Anais Nin had attended Wadleigh. That block would later be known for its drug trafficking; this may even have been true when I worked there. It exuded a depressing air that instilled in me the feeling that once you ended up on this block, you would never be able to get off it. This air was compounded by the sight of men standing quietly alone in front of doorways, peering out at the street.

The positions of Branch Librarian and Young Adult Librarian at 115th Street had been posted in Staff News, but no one had applied, so Mr. Greene, a jovial man in his early forties, and I were sent there by the Manhattan Borough Office. Ideally, black librarians should have filled these positions, instead of having white people in charge of a branch catering to an all-black neighborhood. Unfortunately, there were still

too few black librarians, and those few worked in other black neighborhoods in Harlem or the Bronx. The Children's Librarian, Miss Robbins, was black, as was the Senior Clerk, the elegant Mrs. Williams. Of course, the high school students were all black. Even though I had moved the previous year to Morningside Gardens and lived only one block from Harlem, I had never gone there. To get to work, I remember getting off the bus at 116th Street and Seventh Avenue and walking past a Muslim mosque. Sometimes at night when I had to work until 9 p.m., a staff member walked me to the bus stop, but I still felt as if Harlem were foreign territory. For the entire year I worked there, I don't remember seeing a white person except Mr. Greene and some teachers at the school across the street.

I had never encountered a black person in all my years growing up in Maine. Now I felt uneasy and at times afraid because, according to the media, Harlem was an area of drugs and crime. I certainly knew that some people in the co-op where I lived had been mugged when walking along the paths of public housing a block away. However, I was never accosted or threatened or had an unkind word leveled at me throughout that whole year. A middle-aged patron once told me that, in order to protect me, he had followed a man he thought was following me on the street.

The uneasiness, or even fear, that I sometimes felt may have been the consequence of the separation I had always been aware of. When interacting with black people, I almost always felt a curtain separating us, a shared knowledge that a white person had forced their forebears into slavery and that, after Emancipation, had treated them as second class citizens. If I were they, I thought, I would feel anger or even hatred towards any white person. I remembered an incident when my husband and I managed an apartment house near Times Square. There was a vacant apartment, but when a nicely dressed man, who said he was a writer, answered the

ad, my husband had to tell him it was no longer available. We both felt bad having to turn him away, though we were following the owner's instructions not to rent to a Negro. Now, five years later, I didn't know that my fear of being in Harlem was obvious, until one day Mrs. Williams told me that the kind elderly man who ran a luncheonette across the street, where Mrs. Williams and I sometimes had lunch, told her that he wished I weren't so afraid. I was surprised, because I thought I had masked my fear.

The work in the library itself was enjoyable. I gave book talks in the school across the street, where I talked to the students who then came in after school, and I seemed to be accepted. I went to downtown offices once a month to Book Order where I would see the new books that other librarians thought to be appropriate for young adult audiences. Because of the relatively small circulation in my branch, however, I did not have a large budget to purchase new books.

Again on a monthly basis, there would be a meeting at the Donnell Library Center for all the YA librarians, often featuring a talk by a well-known writer. These were always enjoyable and informative.

One of the best things about working at 115th Street was getting to know Mr. Greene, one of the most congenial and happy people I've ever known. He was obsessed with the world of opera and would talk to me about his summer trips to Europe, specifically to hear a particular company or singer. Because of his glowing reports of Maria Callas, I bought my first opera ticket to hear her. Alas, she was forced to cancel that night's performance, and I heard Mary Costa sing instead.



LYDIA LA FLEUR
on a Harlem street

STEPHEN LIKOFSKY



When I began work, I noticed in the files a three or four page brochure – from one of the libraries upstate – that welcomed inmates back to the community and gave the addresses of a few services that might be of use to them. Since there were so many inmates from New York State prisons coming back into New York City, I wrote to all the state prisons and asked if a resource directory provided by the Library would be of help in their pre-release efforts. Almost every prison responded extremely enthusiastically about the need for such a work, so I started with the simple idea of a directory that would list resources useful for ex-inmates coming out of prison. Later, realizing all the difficulties people had finding work – mainly because they had a prison record or drugs in their past – I extended the directory to include a job hunting guide that took into consideration the special needs of this population. Initially, *Connections* was a one-person effort. I wrote the first edition, dealt with the publisher directly, and did the layout, the artwork, and all the proofreading – going back and forth several times. The booklet was updated every year. At points,

I did it by myself; sometimes other staff and volunteers helped. I really insisted that every single agency be contacted. We had criteria, like a profile sheet, based on the one used for the Community Information Directory. *Connections* was a free publication, and we sent it to all prisoners upon request and to agencies that worked with ex-offenders. We got hundreds and hundreds of letters over the years thanking us and saying how important *Connections* was to those who wrote, especially to the many NYC inmates who were in prison upstate and far removed from their families.

As time went on, the number of chapters and subject categories expanded, and eventually we added the Job Directory and applied for and received grants to do an edition in Spanish. We ran contests among some of the inmates to do a cover design. The job hunting guide had a Sherlock Holmes board game that took you step-by-step, in a graphic way, through the job process. The Job Directory proved to be particularly important since, within the Corrections system, the pre-release cycle lasts just a few weeks, and often prisoners would come back into society with no pre-release training. They were in a total quandary as to whom to contact to get jobs.

I'd also like to mention the importance of *Connections* in HIV/AIDS education. When AIDS first hit, there was a lot of paranoia in the prison system. For example, Correction Officers wouldn't eat anything in the cafeteria prepared by inmates. A lot of the inmates weren't getting visits by social workers. They weren't being taken to programs. They were just locked in their cells, and officers and sometimes even health workers were afraid to go near them. It was a very bad situation. At Rikers, there was an AIDS ward, and we spent a day there with a book cart going from bed to bed giving people reading materials and talking to them. Conditions were awful. There were broken windows with pigeons flying around the room; their droppings were everywhere. The inmates themselves looked like something from a

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT COMMITTEE

photograph of a World War II concentration camp. I had a coworker at the time, Bob Olley, who undertook AIDS in the jails as a cause. He was instrumental in getting large clothing companies to donate blankets to the AIDS ward. He got some inmates to write an article about conditions there and got it published in a series in the *Village Voice*. The Department of Corrections got a lot of bad publicity. It resulted in the building of a new dorm that was far more humane. *Connections* had a lot of information about HIV/AIDS. Some of the chapters were a bit controversial. There were some protests about a chapter on women's needs and another on gay and lesbian needs. Much more attention was paid to the special needs of men rather than those of women, so *Connections* was important in promoting information about and for women, and we got a lot of positive feedback.

I stayed with the job so long, and I never burnt out. I looked forward to going to work every single day for 25 years. There were a lot of changes in the staff that worked with me, but one of the most gratifying things was finding someone on the outside who recognized me and would say, "Because of you I read my first book" or "Because of you I learned how to read, and I now have a job and am supporting my family."

Of all the work I did at The New York Public Library, I think creating *Connections* made me happiest because it offered concrete help to thousands of inmates.

Oral History Project Committee Chair: Mary K. Conwell

Interviewing Task Force Chair: Mary K. Conwell, assisted by interviewers Donna Abbaticchio, Agnes Babich, Angela Calderella, Estelle Friedman, Harriet Gottfried, Betty Gubert, Anne Hofmann, Becky Koppelman, Angeline Moscatt, Carol Reisner, Alan Pally, and Virginia Swift.

Transcription Task Force Chair: Deborah Trepp, assisted by Harriet Gottfried and Wendy Caldiero

Editing Task Force Chair: Jane Kunstler, assisted by editors Mary K. Conwell and Susan Linder

Research Task Force Chair: Ma'lis Wendt, assisted by researchers Betty Gubert and Alice Adamczyk

Association members who have been interviewed or who have provided written remembrances before press time: Alice Adamczyk, Ismael Alicea, Tom Alrutz, Agnes Babich, Osman Bayazid, Adele Bellinger, Bob Bellinger, Yolanda Bonitch, Jean Bowen, Angela Calderella, Wendy Caldiero, Henrietta Cohen*, Phyllis Current, Tom Dickinson, Marie Ferrigno, Estelle Friedman, Telza Gardner, Phil Gerrard, Leonard Gold, Julia Hotton, Alice Hudson, Jim Huffman, Lydia LaFleur, Steve Likosky, Richard Lynch, B. MacDonald, Ray Markey, George Mayer, Robert McBrien, Felix Morales, Lillian Morrison, Aileen O'Brien Murphy*, Fran Nathan, Naomi Noyes*, Edith Ostrowsky, John Peters, Warren Platt, Fran Rabinowitz, Carmen Reyes, Rafael Reyes, Bob Sheehan, Cynthia Smith, Virginia Swift, Dolores Vogliano, Cora Wilmot

*Interviewed by the original Committee in 1998



with the following list, which clarifies what is really involved and how we all might help.

- Each recorded tape has to be turned into print, and, yes, that means someone has to listen to the tape; write down or type as much as possible before stopping the tape, rewinding it, and pushing "play" to listen again and make sure nothing was missed; and then do this over and over, until the transcription is completed. Sound tedious? It is! But if some of us would commit to transcribing just one tape – either following the established formatting guidelines or doing a straight transcription with a Transcription Task Force member taking over the formatting – it would be an enormous help!
- The “raw” transcription, with its “ums” and “ahs” and starts and stops, needs to be carefully edited, following established transcription editing guidelines. I hope those of you who are editors at heart will step forward and become part of our Editing Task Force.
- While the tapes are convenient to use in the transcription process, the threat of damaging them is always there. Short of paying to have the tapes transferred to CD commercially, at a hefty cost, we’re asking if any of you have the equipment, the know-how, and the willingness to do this tape-to-CD transfer. If you just have the know-how and willingness and no equipment, please volunteer anyway. We’ll figure out a way to get the equipment.
- Was interviewing part of what you did at the Library? Would you like to use those skills again as an oral history interviewer? If you feel you’re too rusty, a short brush-up session on interviewing can easily be arranged.
- Do you miss doing research? Join our Research Task Force, which is taking the completed, edited transcriptions and annotating each name, place, organization, etc. that appears in the transcriptions.

NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings to All!

Wonderful excerpts from two recent oral histories appear in this first Newsletter of the year; I hope you enjoy them! Forty-five histories have been recorded to date, and several more are in the pipeline. Many, many thanks to those of you who already have been interviewed or have written remembrances; your names are listed elsewhere in the Newsletter. Over the next three years, the Oral History Project Committee will be reaching out to the rest of our current Association members in the hope that each of you will want to take part in preserving our shared memories of working in The New York Public Library. We’ve learned over this past year that there is much more to the Project than simply cajoling each of us to be interviewed! The Committee has supplied me

- Did you keep some old NYPL Telephone Directories? We've used those from 1966, 1970, 1990, 1996, 1997, 2000, and 2003 to make a database of names with correct spellings for our researchers to check against. If you have directories from other years that you're willing to lend to us, we'll put you in touch with Deborah Trepp. She'll let you know where to send them and promises to return them to you.
- Are your web skills going unused? If you'd like to put them to work by helping design and keep fresh the oral history page on the Retirees Association website, we'll put you in touch with Polly Bookhout who oversees the website.
- Finally, do you know retirees who never joined the Association but who might want to do so now and contribute their memories? Please help us spread the word and recruit new members!

Those of you who live too far away to be interviewed or to help with the tasks above have recently received a letter asking you to write your remembrances and share them with us. I hope you have responded or will respond with a yes! We don't want you to be left out!

To participate in any way you feel most comfortable, contact me (blekopp@gmail.com or 212- 874-6199) or Mary K. Conwell, Chair of the Oral History Project, (mkconwell@yahoo.com or 212-749-8221). We're waiting to hear from you!

Best wishes for 2013 – and enjoy the Newsletter!

UPCOMING EVENTS

LECTURE

Andrew Wilson, Strategic Projects Manager with NYPL, will make a presentation on the history of libraries on Staten Island, beginning with the time before any of the actual buildings were constructed. It will take place at St. George Library on Staten Island at 11:30 a.m. on Monday, April 15, 2013. It will last

approximately one-and-a-half hours and afterwards we will lunch at Beso, a nearby restaurant. Please save the date; more information will be available soon.

CELEBRATION

This year, 2013, we will be celebrating the 20th Anniversary of the NYPL Retirees Association, which was formed in 1993. Juanita Doares spearheaded the association, which was formed as an organization independent of NYPL. At the time, a retirees association was not particularly thought of as needed. However, Juanita, with the help of Agnes Babich, Moritia Leah Frederick (d), Betty Gubert, Mercy Kellogg (d), Larry Murphy (d), and others thought otherwise, and a retirees association was formed and began accepting members. And here we are today, still in existence!

In order to commemorate our 20th Anniversary, we are planning a celebration that will be held in the month of October 2013 at the Mid-Manhattan Library. Our program will include special tributes honoring those who began the Association. There will be refreshments to enjoy and plenty of time to visit with friends and colleagues. Please start thinking now about how YOU can help make our party a success. We hope that you will participate with a poem, a story, a song, or a surprise, so please contact Estelle Friedman at 718-543-9060 or email her at estellefriedman@earthlink.net. Remember, if you don't get in touch with us, we will get in touch with you. Watch for further information.

RETIREES ABOUT TOWN

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

The Retirees Association visited the American Museum of Natural History in November 2012 for a tour that was led by Carol Davies-Gross, our fellow retiree, who is a docent at the Museum. The "Creatures of Light" exhibit welcomed us to the

unusual world of nature's bioluminescence. We were given an opportunity to view fireflies and organisms that glitter and spangle in places we never thought to look. Hundreds of fascinating creatures blink and shine, from glowing mushrooms that grow on rotting tree trunks in the forest to deep-sea creatures that illuminate the dark oceans. Carol did an excellent job of narrating our adventure into the fascinating exhibit.

GRACIE MANSION

In October 2012, the Retirees took a Gracie Mansion Conservancy Tea Tour where we enjoyed the beauty of the Mansion itself, the surrounding gardens on the East River, and a formal tea. The tea consisting of a selection of delicious homemade scones, tea sandwiches, and teacakes, was served in the grand entrance hall.

Our tour was led by retiree Fran Nathan and another docent who welcomed us and introduced us to the history of the elegant home and its furnishings – from the living areas to the upstairs bedrooms. They told us that, in 1799, shipping merchant Archibald Gracie built his country home five miles north of what was then New York City. After changing hands several times, the house was appropriated by the City in 1896. The house and its 11 acres were incorporated into Carl Schurz Park, where the home finally became the official residence of NYC's mayors. In 1942, Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia moved in, as have many subsequent mayors. For us, it was a gracious tour of a gracious home!

ANNUAL HOLIDAY LUNCH

On Friday, January 18, 2013, retirees again celebrated the holiday season and the New Year with a luncheon at Benoit French Restaurant in mid-town Manhattan. Our luncheon last year at Benoit's was such a big hit – the food and service so exceptional – that we felt we wanted to go there again. For lunch we were served an appetizer of Comte Cheese Soufflé or Iceberg Salad with Buttermilk dressing and entrees of either Scottish Salmon or Beef Short Ribs. There was an

elegant Apple Tart for dessert. It all was delicious. If you are looking for a good French Restaurant you might want to try Benoit, at 60 West 55th Street (between 5th and 6th Ave). Many of us recommend it!

SUPERSTORM SANDY AND US Excerpts

If anyone who hasn't seen the longer reports would like a copy, please contact Becky Koppelman (blekopp@gmail.com; 212-874-6199), and they will be sent to you.

TOM ALRUTZ, Newark, N.J.

My condo in Point Pleasant Beach, NJ, had about four feet of water in it, so everything was ruined. I put all furniture, beds, tables, dressers, lamps, etc., on the curb for pick up along with some clothing and bathroom and kitchen supplies. The only thing left standing and dry were my flat screen TV, DVD player and modem, cable box and router. Framed prints on the wall were OK; pots and pans were wet but OK. Dishes and canned and boxed food were high enough to escape. My entire neighborhood at the shore was in the identical situation.

When the contractor was able to start the renovation, all the wallboards were removed so you could see to the four-foot level, front to back, with no lower walls. After this is all over, I should have a brand-new condo, similar to what it was like in 1984 when it was new.

ADELE & BOB BELLINGER, Murray Hill, Manhattan

We lost power on Monday night and got it back early Saturday. We're on 37th Street, a mere two blocks below the 39th Street cutoff, but those two blocks made all the difference. We had filled our bathtub with water and had flashlights and a transistor radio, so our biggest problem was charging our mobile devices! We were able to do so at many locations a

mere two blocks away, including Chase Bank at 41st and Third, where power strips, chairs, and endless coffee were provided for refugees from Manhattan's newest neighborhood: SoPo (South of Power)!

PATRICK HARDISH, Perth Amboy, New Jersey

I lost power about 9:30 on Monday evening, but when I woke up the next morning, all my power was back on except for my cell phone. However, many others in my city of Perth Amboy, NJ, were not so lucky. The waterfront, which is on the other end of town, was hit hard. There were millions of dollars worth of damage, including many boats and restaurants.

LYDIA LA FLEUR, Morningside Heights, Manhattan

Hurricane Sandy did not affect us who live in Morningside Heights except for my telephone. My granddaughter Sarah and her boyfriend, who live in the West Village and had no electricity or Internet, came to stay with me until their power came back on, and I enjoyed their company.

MARCIA LOYD, Arverne. Queens

By 7:50 p.m. on Monday, October 29, lights, heat, and hot water were gone. The lights were out for almost two-and-one-half weeks. My lights came back on in early December; the heat came back on December 11th at 9:57 p.m. My complex ended up with sink holes, and trees fell on many cars. Every car was submerged. I lost all my food. My landline has been out since the storm. My computer had the same fate. I had no elevator for weeks. This experience gave me strength in survival. I was fortunate that my son, who lost his home, was with me during this



Retirees at the Natural History Museum

harrowing ordeal. As I look forward to the rest of this new year, I feel confident. I thank God for family, friends, and concerned colleagues. It was a frightening experience, but I survived.

PETER McCALLION, Lee, Massachusetts/East Village

All is well here in the Berkshires. A few of the trees not uprooted by Hurricane Irene fell and caused some power outages, but we never received the heavy rains and flooding we were told to expect. Fifth Street in the East Village was without power until late Friday, but my place there had no wind or water damage. My thoughts are with the retirees and everyone whose lives were impacted by this super storm.

JAYNE A. PIERCE, Woodbridge, New Jersey

Out here in Woodbridge, NJ, a tree next door took down a lot of wires and blocked the street for days. Power remained out and wires live. A car actually crashed into the 100- year-old tree trunk that was splayed across the street, further stressing first responders' energies with outsiders coming to sightsee. The sidewalk was standing vertically, held in place by the tree roots, every city kid's roller-skater

dream. Not fun but so much, much, much better off than most here in Jersey

JENNINE PORTA, Teaneck, New Jersey

Mark and I lost power around 6 p.m. Monday, but we used the RV fridge and could use the RV generator to watch some TV and charge our cell phones, but cell service was intermittent. All of Teaneck was without power. A branch knocked a metal awning off our back door, but nothing else hit the house and the basement didn't flood. We spent the day sawing up fallen branches and dragging them to the street, pretending we were at a crummy campground.

DEB TREPP, Long Beach, New York

We have had the pleasure of living in Long Beach for most of the 35 years that George has been Library Director. The community has gone through its ups and downs but emerged in recent years, vital and interesting with a beautiful beach and boardwalk, jazz and other music festivals, and many individuals committed to a wide variety of causes. When I retired in 2010, George and I decided to renovate our house; and we were thrilled to create a home where we could welcome our friends and have them share the beautiful resources the seaside offered.

While we have always evacuated in the past, we stayed home this time -- my choice not George's -- and, given that ours is a two-story newly renovated house with an attic, I thought we would be safe, and we were. We did everything we could to prepare, by moving most of our belongings to the second floor, except for six big pieces, three of which we were able to raised up on tables and chairs. But our house is only one house off the bay, perhaps some 50 feet, so we knew we were really vulnerable.

Sunday was windy and wild but nothing out of the ordinary given our prior experience with Nor'easters. By 7 p.m. Monday evening, however, the power was out and water began leaking in through the doors. It was ankle deep when we went upstairs to try to get

some sleep. The water apparently kept rising, eventually reaching 2-3 feet throughout the first floor. By midnight, when we awoke, it had mostly seeped through the floorboards leaving us with mud-stripped floors throughout. Being me, and clearly a lunatic, I spent the next hours hand-wiping each row of den floorboard to eliminate the mud. At 1 a.m., I stopped and went back to bed.

We awoke to a different world. Debris was everywhere, and, around the corner, seven houses had burned down at the height of the storm when two cars exploded and the fire department couldn't get through the shoulder deep water. The library's first floor sustained major damage. Long Beach's water plant failed, and the sewage plant was swept away entirely. Parts of the boardwalk were all over town, and our beautiful beach and boardwalk were gone. Many of our friends lost everything, gratefully not anyone though.

Though we had several offers of places to stay, we had no means of reaching anyone or getting anywhere but to a shelter. Mandatory evacuation orders, due to rapidly developing public health concerns, were issued. Alex, our son who is studying in Boston, rented a car and arrived Wednesday to take us wherever we wanted to go and help us clean up, or to remove us from any shelter we might be in. We went back to Cambridge with him.

Update, January 5, 2013

It has been two months since "Sandy" changed the physical shape of this island and the lives of its residents, and I confess that, for the first month, it was a bit surreal living in a disaster zone. After a month of couch surfing with friends and family, we are back home with a sub-floor, sheetrock walls, heat and electricity -- feels like the Ritz to us -- and we hope to have our first floor restored by Spring.

Regretfully, the Library is another matter, and, while George was able to save a substantial amount of the



Retirees at the Staten Island Yankees baseball stadium

Main Library collection, our West End Branch was destroyed and another branch is undergoing rehabilitation. Restoration work has just begun on the Main Library. For those of you interested in supporting the restoration, please consider going to www.LongBeachLibrary.org and clicking on the “Donate” button. With enough small donations, the Library will be better able to restore its collections and services.

George and I want to thank all of our NYPL family for their offers of shelter and unqualified support throughout. The personal messages of encouragement meant, and continue to mean, a great deal to both of us. We hope everyone has a happy and healthy, disaster-free 2013.

RETIREE NEWS

JACOB AZEKE

I have been Editor and Vice President for Publicity and Public Relations as well as photographer for the DC 37 Retirees Association for the past four years. I have attended meetings, conferences, and conventions in Albany, Philadelphia, Orlando, and Los Angeles, including for the ASCME Retirees 32nd annual meeting and the ASCME 40th convention. Finally, I attended the White House Community Leaders Briefing as ASCME representative; closing remarks were given by Vice President Joe Biden.

AGNES BABICH

The year 2012 was another good one for the Retirees Association. I was fortunate to serve on the Social Committee with Estelle Friedman, and we worked well together. Of course, our President, Becky

Koppelman, helped enormously by coordinating our plans and efforts.

My community, Jackson Heights, was not affected by Hurricane Sandy. However, our various religious and civic organizations immediately became involved in helping victims of this disaster. I'll always remember the day I went to our local park to bring my contributions of food, clothing, and toiletry articles. It was amazing to see hundreds of parents and children adding to the enormous piles of goods. Money was also being raised by 9- and 10-year-old girls, who were giving "manicures" for \$2.00 while their parents manned tables selling food and desserts they had prepared at home.

This experience made me feel grateful and happy to live in a diverse neighborhood where people care about each other as well as those who were so seriously harmed by the hurricane.

AGNES BECK-STATILE

Since my premature retirement in 2009 – necessitated by hip-replacement surgery and rehab after my mugging – my husband and I have been fortunate. We now spend four to five months a year at our cottage in the Catskills. I have helped furnish large-print collections in the area libraries. I was a librarian at the Andrew Heiskell Library. I have zillions of fond memories of colleagues, patrons, celebrities, programs, special events, and awards I received. I continue to be in touch with many of the beautiful and talented young adults (now adults!) who want to remain “friends” with their former librarian. They still keep me feeling relevant, appreciated, and young at heart. Their various stories of graduation and family celebrations (including a baby named after my beloved Sanchi by a beautiful blind mother of two!) will always fill my heart with gratitude and wonder.

POLLY BOOKHOUT

A problem left leg and foot kept me from my usual annual trip, but I do have memories of recent trips: an

archaeological tour of New Mexico and a tour of Morocco and Andalusian Spain. After a year's array of medical procedures and physical therapy, I think I will be up to visiting Barcelona this year.

Hurricane Sandy has made me aware of how important saving family photos and memories in digital form can be. I hope to scan family photos and write up family history for my niece and her children. Of course, I can't start until I have "decluttered" my apartment and basement storage room. I hope a Hunter class with minimum reading will allow me time to pursue my projects.

I have an aversion to Facebook which came about when a fellow high school student wrote nearly daily about what she had for breakfast and such. If I haven't friended you, it isn't personal. Also, I don't like the pestering emails from Facebook. I don't live on Facebook.

VALORIE BOWERS

Happy New Year! I belong to the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (AAHGS), and, this year, fifteen members of our writers' group published narratives of their families. I was pleased and proud to be part of the group. Copies of *Family Legacies* reside at the Library of Congress, Schomburg Library, and the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society.

ANGELA CALDERELLA

I can't believe that three years have flown by, and it is time to renew my membership. Vinny and I are still so busy! Last April, we flew to Hawaii for a twelve-day cruise. It was awesome! We are hoping to visit Italy this September! I've become involved with the Retirees' Oral History Project, having done two interviews with one more pending. I continue to present monthly storytelling/reading aloud programs at the Jeanne Jagan Nursing Home in Throggs Neck. The residents are a great audience, and I enjoy preparing and conducting these programs. It enables

me to continue doing my favorite part of children's librarianship!

BERYL EBER

Retirement continues to be blissful. Doing more reading than ever. Theatre, movies, long walks. Recently added water aerobics to my swimming routine. Tutoring at Seward Park's Adult Learning Center brings rewards that warm the heart. After a painful loss, adopted a new furry friend, Phoebe, a one-year-old dilute calico. She is sassy and gorgeous. Eating out with friends at restaurants, from cheap to elegant, is one of my favorite activities. A day trip to Grounds for Sculpture was amazing; highly recommended for a cultural activity.

ESTELLE FRIEDMAN

December was an interesting month for us. I went to China to attend my great nephew's wedding. I met my niece (who flew in from Los Angeles) in Shanghai. My daughter met us in China; she flew in from Sweden where she had been invited to attend the Nobel festivities.

The bride was lovely, but she was the only one in her family who spoke English. The wedding was in Changdo, the capital of the province of Szechuan. It seems the people living there have their own language – not Mandarin or Cantonese or English. Evidently, few Westerners ever come to Changdo because people kept taking pictures of us and even took



Emily Cohen with her band at Bayberry Care Center in New Rochelle

pictures WITH us. People got very excited when they heard we came from AMERICA. The wedding was an interesting mix – a combination of Buddhism and Judaism. Different parts of the ceremony were translated by the Maid of Honor into Chinese (Mandarin), and the Best Man translated the Chinese parts into English. Since red is the good luck color, the bride wore red, and all the men (including the Consul General) wore red yarmulkes. I had a great deal of difficulty using chop sticks. Bernard, my great nephew, who speaks Chinese perfectly, took us to his favorite Chinese restaurants, managed the taxicabs, took us to a Chinese opera, put us on a bullet train, and showed us around Beijing (where the temperature was about -17 degrees F), Nanjing, and Shanghai, where we spent New Year's Eve.

I could go on and on about our hotel accommodations in a "historic" hotel where we were served rice and

quail's eggs for breakfast. The streets are very clean – no paper, cigarette butts, or gum. The street cleaners are constantly sweeping, including the cover to my camera. The mopeds and motorcycles are so quiet you don't hear them when they come up behind you on the sidewalks.

It is certainly the most different country I have ever visited.

HARRIET GOTTFRIED

The highlight of 2012 for me was a trip to Amsterdam and Belgium in the spring with my husband Elliot. Then there was Christmas when we had 15 people over, including my granddaughters from Wisconsin. It was wonderful to see everyone, and it made me realize again how fast time goes and how much I treasure the times when family and friends are altogether. I have also become involved in a Memoir Writing Workshop that I will be taking up again this year. So far I have been concentrating on and writing about growing up in Queens. This semester I hope to get to parts of my library career. Happy New Year to all.

PATRICK HARDISH

My song cycle *Two Poems* for soprano voice and piano was professionally recorded on April 20, 2012, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, for a CD of song cycles that is to be released commercially sometime early next year.

I attended the annual meetings of the Atlantic Chapter of the Music Library Association at Princeton University on Oct. 19-20, 2012, and a meeting of the Greater NY Chapter of the Music Library Association at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center, on Dec. 14, 2012. I also attended a meeting of the NYPL Retirees Association on Oct. 9, 2012, for a tour of Gracie Mansion.

I am currently doing my civic duty serving for the first time on a petit jury in a criminal case.

NORMA HERZ

I would like to share a brief memory of Laurel Alexander, who was Branch Librarian at Stapleton Library on Staten Island in the 1970's. I worked many years at Stapleton as Children's Librarian and then as Ms. Alexander's Assistant. She was a remarkable woman. Please let the moment not pass to share with you some spirit that will always make me feel blessed to have worked with the Library. Below is a poem I wrote for Ms. Alexander and the Stapleton Library to mark the 20th Anniversary of the death of Laurel Alexander, 1925-1992.

Bread - golden crusted loaf in sunlight
filled with waiting promise.
Real bread for all the hungry children.
Now, the baker gone, how many find
themselves remembering
That once they shared the feast
of that good bread?

ALICE HUDSON

I am working on a website for the Map Division, listing some 1000 pre-1900 NYC mapmakers. It will be a useful tool for researchers, map collectors, and dealers. I also have a possible offer to curate an exhibition in 2015 on women in cartography at a northeastern university. I will provide more details once it is funded and guaranteed to happen! I am on various map collection advisory boards: Boston Public, Tampa Bay History Center, and LOC Geography & Map center. It gets me out of the City once in a while.

BECKY KOPPELMAN

Mary K. Conwell and I have been taking recorder lessons for a number of years now. There are six women in our class. We all started out as beginners. Now, two members (myself included) play the soprano recorder, two play alto, two (including Mary K.) play tenor, and our teacher, David, plays bass recorder. We call ourselves the "Recordistas." David is a wonderful teacher – supportive and positive. The

recorder is not as easy to play as you may think; to play it well and make beautiful music, you must practice and count the time correctly. We work hard on our pieces.

We laugh a lot in class, too, and really enjoy taking lessons together. Every year at the end of September, we six women pack up our recorders and suitcases and head for Bridgewater Corners, Vermont, for a long weekend. We stay in a charming old home that is attached to the Post Office, play music, do some sight-seeing, look for Moose (they are around), and, of course, we eat. There are many great foods we enjoy: delicious Vermont cheeses, frikadeller (amazing little Danish pork dumplings), fresh corn, tomatoes, and apples, and – for dessert – wonderful strawberry rhubarb pie! It's all washed down with plenty of good Vermont wines. We've also taken up "Texas Hold'em" poker. As we are not very good, we play only for pennies, but what enormous fun! At the end of our weekend, we finish the leftover pie, clean up, pack our bags and recorders, and head back to the city to begin our fall recorder classes with David.

JANE KUNSTLER

I can hardly believe that I've been retired for almost five years. Of course, since the first year was taken up by consulting for NYPL, my retirement didn't really start until the following year. Then, after dealing with an infestation of bed bugs at home – I was in the vanguard of that lovely epidemic – I went to stay with



Recordistas ready to play

my then 101-year-old mother who had been living by herself in her own apartment with only a twice-weekly aide (and me) to help her. My short visit turned into a stay of two years; it lasted until my mother's death at 103 in 2011. She was a remarkable woman, and I was glad that I was able to be there for her.

It took me five months to close her beautiful apartment and to ship her wonderful things to my sister, niece, and nephew. (Here's a plug for Moshe's – they were great, from beginning to end.) Returning to my apartment full-time was a bit discombobulating after two years and entailed a great deal of work; integrating my mother's things into my already too small apartment was a gargantuan task. I'm still working on it.

My sister and I took a wonderful cruise through the Panama Canal over New Year 2012. It was my first cruise, and I loved it. We read, went to a movie or two every day when we were cruising, watched for sea creatures, went on a bunch of nature excursions, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We also went to Florida and then on a Caribbean cruise with some fellow retirees – both hers and mine. Our next cruise will be to Hawaii in April.

Retirement is great!

MARK McCLUSKI & JENNINE PORTA

Our major activity was a two-month RV trip from Christmas through February. The trip included stops in North Carolina, Myrtle Beach, Jekyll Island, Daytona Beach, Orlando, the Everglades, the Florida Keys (including a five-day stay in Key West for our anniversary), an RV rally in Jacksonville, then across the panhandle to New Orleans before heading home.

Later in the year, on the home front, we had a nice day out with Elaine Thomas and Carol and Ed Breheny at the NY Historical Society for their exhibit on beer; Jeanie and I saw a concert with the Steve Miller Band at the Bergen PAC; and we attended the Retirees Association event at the Staten Island Yankee Game (from which I have *no* good shots of our members at all). We did a mini-vacation (how cool to think of two weeks as a “mini-vacation”) to Cape Cod, where we saw, among other things, the Provincetown Library and the Edward Gorey House. The Gorey House alone was worth the trip! In the fall we did some family stuff in North Carolina and another RV rally in the mountains of Virginia. We went low-key after that.

ALAN PALLY

I'm a Trustee of the Noël Coward Foundation, which sponsored an exhibition at the Performing Arts Library in 2012. In conjunction with the exhibition, I had the pleasure of giving a talk at LPA in June. I was particularly moved that so many NYPL retirees

attended. (Gluttons for punishment are invited to attend my next talk at LPA, on Monday, June 10th at 6 p.m., when the subject will be "Lillian, Kate, and Uta: Powerful Women, Great Actors, Amazing Archives," a lecture focusing on programs I produced celebrating the donations of the Lillian Gish, Katharine Hepburn, and Uta Hagen Papers to the Theatre Division). My work with the Coward Foundation took me to London twice in 2012 for board meetings. I saw many friends and lots of theater there as well. I look forward to attending the next meeting in London in March 2013.

I'm also on the board of the HB Playwrights Foundation and have recently been appointed to the Board of Directors of HB Studio. Both the Foundation and the Studio were run for many years by Herbert Berghof and Uta Hagen. The Board is embarking on a strategic planning process that I am very excited to be a part of.

In November, I interviewed Richard Lynch for the NYPL Retirees Oral History Project. Richard and I have been friends for nearly 40 years, yet I learned a lot about his career during the interview.

FRAN RABINOWITZ

I hope all of you have had a wonderful holiday season. There was further celebration in the air when my son Jonathan brought a production of *Much Ado About Nothing* to the 133rd St Arts Center. The play opened on February 14 and runs through March 2. Thanks to those of you who attended a performance. Your support of the cast and crew was very much appreciated. Further information may be found at <http://www.snappedproductions.com/productions.html>

ARTHUR RUHL

For most of the year, I live in rural north-east Thailand with my wife and her two nieces. I come back to New York for a visit once or twice a year for two or three months. My last visit was September to

December 2012, at which time I did my taxes, went on Jury Duty, kept doctors' appointments, ate in my favorite ethnic restaurants, and shopped in bookstores for several books to bring back with me to Thailand. I also visited my daughter upstate near Buffalo – twice – where she is studying to be a carpenter. I managed to go on the Gracie Mansion tour with the Retirees in October and also took a day-trip to Arthur Avenue in the Bronx. In Thailand, I spend part of my time teaching the nieces English. The Village Head-Man/Mayor wants English lessons from me also.

While in Thailand, I completed writing a manuscript on the life of my grandfather. He was a professional sculptor, who assisted the Piccirilli Brothers in carving Patience and Fortitude, the two Library Lions outside the main building at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street.

I am now working on a second manuscript about my 35 years of international travel to 66 countries. I would eventually like to make it either into a book or else individual articles to be submitted to various travel magazines.

Living in Thailand most of the year is wonderful; it has a nice warm climate year round. To get to my house, I have to take three plane flights, a total of 21 hours flying-time, but it's worth it.



Visiting Harry Potter

I encourage everybody to come visit Thailand, a wonderful country to visit or to live in, where people live by the saying Happy Have Fun. Until next time, all the best to everyone from what is known by expats as LOS (Land Of Smiles).

CAROL THOMAS

I have been retired two years now. It's a job being retired! Work was all I'd known since my teenage years! I no longer have to ask myself how will I keep busy! Well, I'm happy to report I am adjusting quite fine! I have been afforded the opportunity of traveling. I have been to Cancun and Hawaii. Most recently, I spent some a time in the U.S. Virgin Islands. I also embarked on the overwhelming task of redecorating and organizing! You don't realize how chaotic things are until you have time to sit still, and boy do I have my work cut out for me. But of all the great things retirement has allowed, spending

precious time with the grand and great grandchildren has been the best part. I split my time between New York and Connecticut so I can be with them more, and it has been wonderful!

DEB TREPP

While 2012 ended a bit grimly, Alex, George, and I enjoyed a rare and wonderful seven-day vacation together at the Nayara Hotel and Gardens in Arenal, Costa Rica, last May. It's an exquisite venue, located deep in the mountains of central Costa Rica, where each hotel room is a separate one-room house. We white water rafted, zip lined from 700 feet (totally amazing) at 40+ miles per hour, hiked, visited wildlife preserves with talented naturalists, and relaxed with great food and wine in the shade of the Arenal Volcano !! I've recommended Nayara to everyone – best vacation ever.

We are looking forward to Spring 2013, which brings our son's graduation from Harvard Law...and an end to tuition payments! We are thrilled for Alex and very proud of him; he'll be clerking in a Federal Court in the Southern District in NYC.

JEANNE UNHJEM

Five years ago, I sold my three-bedroom/three-bath co-op apartment, which had a sweeping view of Manhattan and the harbor, and moved into a community of continuing care. Glen Arden is in historic Goshen, New York, with its carefully maintained Victorian houses, and it is near my youngest son. I was in good health then, and, now, at eighty-nine (soon), I remain in good health and thoroughly enjoy my new active life here. A number of other residents are also from the metropolitan area.

I heartily recommend this lifestyle. Finding a place near a relative is important, but for those who do not have younger family members, this kind of community gives you a greater feeling of security as the years roll by.

JULIA VAN HAAFTEN

I consulted for the MIT Museum's exhibition, "Berenice Abbott: Photography and Science, an Essential Unity," and wrote an essay for the companion book before being sidelined for the rest of the year with a broken wrist, which is much better now.

MA'LIS WENDT

I can't believe I've been retired for five years – sometimes I wonder how I ever found time to work. I've got lots of activities in addition to the Retirees Association events and the Oral History Committee. I'm looking forward to conducting my first Oral History interview soon. I volunteer at the Lefferts Old Dutch Farm House Museum in Prospect Park with their Collection Management Department and am learning about museum acquisition, cataloging, and management (somewhat similar to library cataloging and management, but different enough to be challenging). I love learning about the New York Dutch heritage and history since I grew up on California – not New York – history. I'm the treasurer for Literacy for Incarcerated Teens, thanks to Karlan Sick, our President. We are a small non-profit that provides funds for books, author visits, and other literacy activities for youth detention centers in New York City and State. I'm also still active in ALA with the Intellectual Freedom Committee, YALSA, and the new Retired Members Round Table, and I'm still participating in accreditation visits to library schools with the Office of Accreditation. I try to get to at least one museum a week and have been pretty successful with that resolution.

VIRGINIA WARNER

Emily Cohen reports that Virginia Warner is going on a twelve-day Caribbean cruise during which she will be stopping at Saint Martin and having lunch with retiree Marie Spicer Rohan who lives there now.

BONNIE WILLIAMS

2012 was a pretty good year, regardless of some ongoing, but not life-threatening, physical situations. I visited my Mobile, Alabama, family in August – my great-grand nephew Connor is now eight years old and turning into a great swimmer and reader. In the Georgia family, my great nephew Nicholas finished an MBA and is now a Phoenix! His daughter Madeline will graduate high school in May, and her two younger brothers are busy with soccer, baseball, track, and theater. This fall, I was elected President of Penn South Social Services – the umbrella organization that sponsors our Senior Center and is a home and social services consumer co-op that helps with discounts on services such as home health aides. I'm taking over from the founder and 26-year President, so I'm dealing with change, re-organization, and modernization of a small office. I had served for five years as a member of the Board. I'll let you know next year how it all works out. I hear regularly from Penny Jeffrey who was a YA librarian at NYPL, and I go to the National Theater HD film productions at NYU with Nadine Covert, former film librarian. For the most part, I still attend the Met Opera, concerts, and theatre. I met a woman recently who recognized me from Muhlenberg (so long ago). She was very complimentary and said she missed me there. Sometimes people do recall what I tried to do, and sometimes, evidently, I was successful. Regards to all.

JUTTA ZAPLINSKI

On one of our trips, we fell in love with Savannah, Georgia, and decided on the spot that this is the place we would love to live. It's a beautiful city close to the ocean but still in relatively safe distance from the rising sea level. We're walking distance to all the



Visiting the New-York Historical Society

interesting places and parks, particularly the Historic District. Although I'll be unable to attend most of the activities, I still want to be part of the Retirees Association.

REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES

If you did not receive the Association's more detailed emails about these colleagues and would like to read them, please contact: (Becky Koppelman blekopp@gmail.com; 212-874-6199), and they will be sent to you.

ELIZABETH "BETSY" BLATZ

Betsy came to NYPL in 1980 and worked in various branches in the Bronx and Manhattan, most notably as long-time branch librarian at Kips Bay. Her last assignment before retirement was at Mid-Manhattan. She died of cancer on August 31, 2012.

DINO CAPONE

Dino, who worked for many years in the Stack Maintenance and Delivery Division, died on

December 17, 2012. A native of Altoona, PA, Dino graduated from Penn State University and also attended Fordham, Hunter, and City College in New York City. He retired from NYPL about ten years ago.

LOU DELLA ELLIOTT

Lou Della began at NYPL as a clerk, became a senior clerk, went to Library School, and became a children's librarian and a branch librarian. She worked in many branches in the Bronx and retired from Hunt's Point. She died on November 27, 2012 at the age of 65.

ROSE MESSER

Rose, who died on May 23, 2012, at the age of 96, was a secretary for many years at NYPL and an avid world traveler (Afghanistan, Vietnam, Greece, Iran, China, Russia, and India.) She was predeceased by her ex-husband and her daughter.



Rose Messer

EDWARD L. ORFF

Ed was a Branch Librarian in both the Bronx and Manhattan. He retired from Yorkville. He was a World War II veteran. He died in Milford, Massachusetts, the town where he was born, on February 5, 2012, at the age of 89.

JOSEPH ROSENTHAL

Joseph A. Rosenthal, Chief of Preparation Services, Research Libraries, from 1966 to 1970 died on April 7, 2012 at the age of 81. In addition to his time at NYPL, Joe taught Technical Services at Columbia and worked at the Library of Congress and the University of California, Berkeley, where he was University Librarian. Retired, he was a volunteer head librarian of the American Conservatory Theatre Library and volunteered for ACT and Project Inform, and HIV/AIDS information service.

ANDREW SAMMARCO

After working many years for Texaco, Andrew P. Sammarco, 61, was the General Accounting Manager for NYPL for eight years, until his retirement in 2010. He was an avid Yankee fan. He drowned on October 29th when he was trapped in his basement by the storm surge from Superstorm Sandy.

DOROTHY SWERDLOVE

Dorothy, who joined the NYPL Theater Collection in 1961 and retired as its Curator in 1990, died in Tucson, Arizona, on December 30, 2012, at the age of 84. (A tribute from Alan Pally follows).

A TRIBUTE TO DOROTHY SWERDLOVE by Alan Pally

Dorothy Swerdlove, who joined the NYPL Theatre Collection in 1961 when it was still in the "Central Building" and retired as Curator on December 19, 1990, died in Tucson, Arizona on December 30, 2012. She enjoyed more than two decades of retirement, first in NYC, then in Tucson.

I met Dorothy in 1972, when she was Assistant Curator of the Theatre Collection. When Paul Myers retired, she became Curator, working tirelessly on behalf of important acquisitions, staff, new program areas, preservation, and public service. She was one of those very special and talented professionals who helped create LPA and became one of the original staff members when the building at Lincoln Center opened in 1965. To me, Dorothy always personified graciousness and quiet competence. I never saw her get angry.

Dorothy was active professionally in library and theater circles, serving as President of the Theatre Library Association, Secretary-Treasurer of the Outer Critics Circle, and Vice President of the International Association of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts (SIBMAS). She also worked on behalf of the Drama Desk/New Drama Forum and the League of Professional Theatre Women and published numerous articles and reviews. She was a fine actress and a member of the Snarks, a venerable all-female theater company. She told me once that her degree had been in economics. She studied at Swarthmore College and Columbia University School of Library Science.

I have many pleasant memories of Dorothy, of being taken to the theater by her (to see Piper Laurie in a revival of S.N. Behrman's *Biography*, among other plays); of her performances in the LPA Staff Show in the 1980s (Larry Cioppa, who coordinated and



emceed the Show, called her his "prestige act;") of a jolly lunch with Dorothy and Dick Buck at A Taste of India restaurant in Covent Garden; of her work as a cashier on the old LPA Bazaar; and of her retirement party, when she was presented with an Al Hirschfeld caricature of herself. When I retired, she sent me a present: a beautiful T-shirt with a rather impressive wolf's head on the front, from the zoo in Tucson, where Dorothy worked as a volunteer.

When Dorothy retired, I was Editor of *Broadside*, the Newsletter of the Theatre Library Association. I asked Dick Buck (who died in December 2011) to write a piece about her. His piece concluded thus: "As we, her colleagues at The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center and in the Theatre Library Association bid her an official au revoir ..., we look back on all the years and realize that a bit of our professional lives will leave with her."

HOLIDAY LUNCH 2013





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