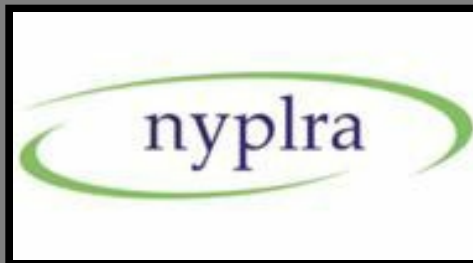


# New York Public Library Retirees Association Newsletter



Fall 2015

Issue Number 36

## **THE STORYTELLING TRADITION AT NYPL**

By Marilyn Berg Iarusso, former Storytelling Specialist and  
Assistant Coordinator of Children's Services



**Leo Schreiner, storyteller, at 1993 Storytelling Symposium  
at West New Brighton Branch in Staten Island**

The Storytelling Symposium was the most festive children's librarians' meeting each year at The New York Public Library. It was held, usually during the first week of May,

to celebrate the birthday of the great English educator and storyteller, Marie Shedlock, who wrote the classic book *The Art of the Storyteller*. Her American tour, during

which she presented programs such as “The Wit and Wisdom of Hans Christian Andersen” at fashionable venues, convinced Anne Carroll Moore, the first Superintendent of Work with Children, that every children’s room should have regular storytelling programs.

The Assistant Coordinator of Children’s Services/Storytelling Specialist planned and hosted the event. The Symposium was supposed to be full of flowers, for spring and celebration, which was not too difficult in the early years when everybody had yards and gardens, especially when the program was on Staten Island. Staff members from various branches would arrive first thing in the morning the day before with flowers from their gardens. The most beautiful flowers I ever used were tulips grown by Betsy Mullan when she was the head of St. George. I’m still looking for tulips like those. People like the lovely Mary Maidoff, a clerk, used to let us go to her yard to cut branches off her pink dogwood. I remember Regina Machules, West New Brighton children’s librarian, holding the ladder so I could climb up. A neighbor once came over to make sure we weren’t breaking into the house!

No one was supposed to know who the storytellers were until we marched in on the day of the program. The Storytelling Specialist introduced the program and thanked everybody who had helped to prepare for it. There were always many to thank. People arranged flowers, chopped strawberries, and helped the storytellers polish their stories. At Belmont, the head librarian, Marisa Parrish, even painted walls in the days before the program. Then, the storytelling candle was lit and the program began. When I was a children’s librarian, I heard many inspirational speeches about the power of storytelling. When I was the host,

I was more comfortable talking about the storytellers and how they had found their way into work with children. It seemed to me to be a way of creating a sense of community. People told their stories; the audience laughed and gasped and held its breath. The program ended with a wish as the candle was blown out, and a reception followed—featuring May wine and strawberries and a toast to storytellers and storytelling. In later years, with rising consciousness, we added non-alcoholic drinks. One later Children’s Services Coordinator finally insisted on a less sweet wine.

The Symposium, in its early years, always featured children’s librarians because they were the only ones who told stories. The stories had to come from published books, which, I was told, was why Pura Belpré began to publish the folktales she had learned in Puerto Rico. The new children’s librarians had to select a story listed in the “Stories” list, which NYPL updated periodically. It was generally assumed that the storyteller was supposed to tell the stories word for word, although even giants like Augusta Baker, former Coordinator of Children’s Services and a renowned storyteller, began to waffle on that towards the end of her life. Perhaps that wasn’t as intimidating in the early years when the tellers were people like Maria Cimino, former head of Central Children’s Room, who had expected to be an opera singer. At any rate, the story was supposed to sound like the story as published.

The first time I encountered the Storytelling Symposium in 1966, I was one of the new, terrified storytellers. The guest storyteller, Mary Howe Zipprich, who I think was a retired children’s librarian, was a wonder. She told an outrageous, long, Seumas MacManus Irish “Wicked John” that made

the audience almost collapse in laughter. Clara Hulton, the Storytelling Specialist, took the tellers to lunch at the Algonquin, which was thrilling and was the only time I was ever to lunch there. The tellers didn't even have to go back to work. Those were the days! In later years, we had banquets at local restaurants and, finally, turned to box lunches on the lawn as the pressure mounted to get us back to the branches more quickly.

Most of the Symposiums were at West New Brighton, but the earliest records I found were Seward Park in 1932 and St. George in 1938. The first one ever held was in 1909, location unnoted. In the '40s, '50s, and '60s, it was mostly West New Brighton and occasionally Central Children's Room. In the late '70s, it began to wander and included Jefferson Market, Lincoln Center, Epiphany, Library for the Blind, and Belmont—along with West New Brighton. The location seemed sometimes to involve a search for bathrooms. Belmont and Donnell won the bathroom contest, but the flowers got lost in the cavernous Central Children's Room Reading Room, which made me sad. The choice of location was made at a higher pay grade than mine.

As storytelling became more widespread, less restrained but admirable tellers emerged. We continued to feature new children's librarians from our training seminars, but we were able to introduce guests from outside. When we experienced financial crises and staff shortages, we presented special programs like the wonderful Folktellers from North Carolina, two cousins who drove up the East Coast in their jalopy, introducing themselves to librarians. I bet a lot of people still remember Barbara Freeman, in 1977, telling "How to Get Peanut Butter off the Roof of Your Mouth." The following year, Augusta Baker came back to anchor a two-day

program, with a workshop on storytelling and a conversation with Maria Cimino about the history of storytelling at the library. After that, one of the most remarkable storytellers was Carol Birch, the first non-NYPL librarian to tell at a regular Symposium. She presented "Rootabaga" stories from Carl Sandburg as if she came from Rootabaga country. Having more choices also brought some tension in balancing "traditional" style in telling with more dramatic renditions. When I was very new to the job, and anxious, I interviewed the wonderful Laura Simms about doing a Symposium and asked her if she could tone down the witch voice in a Korean folktale so that the older children's librarians wouldn't have heart attacks. I have the distinct memory, during Laura's telling, of stealing glances at Aileen O'Brien Murphy, the then Materials Specialist, to see if she was enjoying Laura's story. Laura was a hit! Even greater culture shock threatened when Deborah Rothrock, a remarkable presence who performed with ankle bells and some sort of unusual squeeze box for music, was guest. Another highlight was Gioia Timpanelli telling, in Italian or possibly Sicilian, a folktale about a witch in a garbage pit. Don Walker, the Coordinator of Adult Services, was as astonished as the rest of us. We believed we had understood every word! The year Peninnah Schram told Jewish tales, Julia Brody, Bronx Borough Office, was almost in tears from hearing stories from her family traditions. Chad Quartuccio, former Staten Island children's specialist, and a memorable storyteller himself, said that he was propelled into storytelling by hearing the Irish storyteller, Joe Heaney.

Memories I cherish include our own librarians and staff. Regina Brown, long a clerk at George Bruce, and a former actress, was such a gifted storyteller that the Office

of Children's Services "borrowed" her in the summer to tell stories in the parks. In about 1968, she told another rollicking MacManus tale about a magical "Wee Red Man" who tricks a man into chopping the heads off of his wife and mother-in-law and the legs off of the King's horse in the belief that they will come back improved. It was amazing! Another astonishing performer was someone I remember as Anne Santangelo who told the Winnie-the-Pooh chapter in which Pooh gets stuck. It was an awesome telling but, it seemed to me in retrospect, not a sustainable approach in a system with less than one children's librarian in each branch. Another vivid memory grew out of the incongruity of watching the beautiful Gladys Lemon tell a short "jump" story. The borough specialist and I had both heard Gladys tell this story in practice. Suddenly, at Symposium, when the monster "spoke," a creepy, non-human sound came out of Gladys' lovely mouth. It made us laugh, even as our skin crawled. Maxine Johnson of Hamilton Grange suddenly caught on fire telling, I believe, "Wicked John and the Devil," and it was like we were at a church revival, with hammers going and the devil squealing. Lillie Prioleau of Aguilar told a story called "Peerless Beauty" with a quiet depth of humanity and wisdom I never forgot. I loved hearing Nobuko Ohashi Wilson tell a story she had learned from Margaret MacDonald in library school. MacDonald's storytelling books were revolutionizing storytelling. Nobuko told with gestures and syncopation, and it seemed to me that the strains of modern storytelling were finally coming together at NYPL.

There were years when we were in crisis, without new librarians or even training seminars. We had "old storytellers" one year featuring former children's librarians who had become top managers, including Mary Barrett, Joan Treble, and Julia Brody.

One year I invited people who had not been previously invited to tell. I liked that one. There were a lot of considerations involved in selecting who would be a teller. Putting together an appealing, varied program and getting a geographical representation were part of it. People generally believed the librarians selected were the "best" of the year, but there were lots of other people who became successful storytellers, and they were all worth hearing.

Through all the years, the most amazing thing about the Storytelling Symposium is that—every time—someone would come up to me and say, "This was the best one ever!"



**Eating box lunches in West New Brighton back yard**



**Branch Librarian Margaret Ma with May Wine**

## NOTES FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Greetings!

Here is your latest Newsletter (Fall 2015; Issue Number 36). I hope this finds you all in good spirits. Perhaps we might even have a mild winter—if that is possible here in the northeast. But get ready, because the holidays are coming soon!

First of all, our By-Laws, which were sent out to you earlier, elicited no objections and are considered approved as of September 30, 2015. They now appear on our website.

Since our last Newsletter, our board members and committee chairs have been busy! Putting together a Newsletter like this one is a lot of work, but the Newsletter is filled with great articles.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Our Annual Luncheon will be held Friday, April 8, 2016. We conducted a small survey and everyone said emphatically, “We have to go back to La Mirabelle,” which is an authentic French bistro on West 86th Street in Manhattan. It is a lovely, friendly place, and when we gathered there for our 2015 Luncheon, the only problem was the date! We had chosen March, thinking that the weather would be fine. You may recall there were many snowstorms here in NYC and the surrounding area. Sure enough, the day before the luncheon, there was a late, deep snowfall, making it difficult for our guests to get to the restaurant. Some were unable to travel at all, while a few people had falls in the snow and were hurt on the ice. But the fifty-five of us who made it had a great time as well as a delicious meal. So, **please save April 8, 2016**, and, when our notice arrives, you will be ready to make your reservation.

Our tour of the **Good Housekeeping Research Institute** took place on Friday, November 13, 2015. We saw how scientists, engineers, and chemists actually evaluate thousands of products that we all use in our households, and we learned what happens to the items that are not approved. Do they show up for public use somewhere? Stay tuned for a follow-up report in our next Newsletter.

We are in the very early stages of planning a tour of the **Barnes Foundation Museum**, which was founded in Merion, Pennsylvania, in 1922 by Albert C. Barnes and Laura L. Barnes. The great private collection of post-impressionist and early modern art is now housed in a new building on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. We will have more information soon.

## NEWS ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER ITSELF

Emily Cohen is our new editor!

Most of you are aware that we have had Newsletters and editors since the Association was formed in 1992. The editor suggests the schedule, solicits articles, designs the layout, and arranges for the Newsletter to be printed. Many—including each of you through your news items—contribute to the content. Finally, copy editors work their magic on all those commas, italics, and quotation marks. It takes a lot of time and is a lot of work. Thank you, Emily, for taking on this important position!

Emily follows two distinguished editors: Larry Murphy and Polly Bookhout. Larry worked with Director John Cory from 1949 until retiring in 1991, when he joined the Association and began working diligently on the Newsletters. Polly interviewed Larry



and wrote a fascinating article about him that you can find on our website <[www.nyplra.org](http://www.nyplra.org)> under "Newsletters: Summer 2005, Issue No. 19." In fact, you can read all of our Newsletters – except for the very first one - there!

### A TRIBUTE TO POLLY



Polly Bookhout became our second editor in 2004. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley, Polly worked as a clerk at the campus hospital nearby, saving part of her salary to pay for a year of library training. She was told that there were seven jobs available for each library school graduate, and NYPL hired her immediately. She began working as a children's librarian in October 1961. She worked at Kingsbridge Branch and then was then sent to Grand Concourse for training with Margaret Bush, who had only been hired the year before. Polly says "I owe my career at NYPL to her." Polly retired in 1999 as Branch Librarian at the Columbus Library. She immediately joined the Retirees Association and began planning social events. Her first planned tour was a visit to the Noguchi Museum, which took place shortly after the events of 9/11. She and other members, although still upset by that horrific event, went for their tour. They remember arriving and realizing how peaceful and soothing the

museum was, especially walking quietly in the celebrated sculpture gardens. The mood was calm and contemplative and helped ease their minds.

Much changed in the Association for Polly when she became Vice President in 2004. She started by producing two newsletters a year and created the membership database. The original text-based website evolved, around 2008 under Polly's sure hand, into a graphic one. She has become our Webmaster, constantly maintaining our website and our email-list communications. During her tenure, she edited nineteen full issues of our Newsletter. No small feat! Polly told us this September that she would no longer be newsletter editor. But she will remain our Vice President and will concentrate on her other duties.

Polly, we honor you for your dedication and hard work in all that you have done for our Retirees Association. You have been an excellent editor, never failing to produce a great Newsletter appreciated by all of our members. Polly, we thank you!

Now, enjoy your Newsletter—Emily's first.

From all of us here, we wish you a wonderful Holiday Season and a marvelous New Year! And do keep in touch. Remember, everyone loves to hear from YOU!

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## **FAMILY HISTORY INTERSECTS WITH N.Y.P.L. HISTORY**

By Emily Cohen

I am a retired librarian and a NYPLRA member.

A few months ago, a friend suggested to my husband that he search Google Books as a possible resource for family history information. This friend had found information there for his own family genealogy project.

My husband Allen doubted that his own ancestors would turn up in such a search since he knew those who came to this country at the turn of the twentieth century were ordinary poor immigrants who lived on the Lower East Side of New York City. Still, he was curious enough to type in the name of his paternal grandfather Kalman and 1911, the year the man might have died. He made this estimate based on information his dad had related years ago when Allen interviewed him. (Yes, one might say that Allen had conducted his own Oral History Project!)

Amazingly, a magazine article did appear on the computer. It was from *Publisher's Weekly* of September 9, 1911. We were stunned to read that Allen's grandfather, a book dealer, had been found selling from his pushcart 200 books stolen from the Seward Park Branch Library. There was no doubt that this person was indeed Allen's grandfather, as other sources had already given his address and occupation. What came as a shock was that he had been involved in selling stolen library books!

We came up with a plan to symbolically restore the family honor. A donation of \$200 would be made to the Seward Park

Branch to "atone" for this crime of over a century ago. A particular date in June was chosen since Allen's cousin, also a descendant of Kalman's, was going to be visiting New York that day. Shown in the photo are Allen and his cousin Marty in front of the library building preparing to go inside to present the donation check to the person in charge. A note explained the unusual reason for the donation, and a copy of the *Publisher's Weekly* article was enclosed.

The next step in research was to obtain copies of court records from the Municipal Archives. Among them was a report to Benjamin Adams, Chief of Circulation of The New York Public Library, from Edwin White Gaillard, Supervisor of Work With Schools. We were confused to read this at first. Why would a person with Gaillard's title be doing the detective work described in the report? The report begins, almost amusingly, "On Labor Day, September 4, 1911 at 2:45 PM while working in my tomato patch at Port Washington, Long Island, I received a summons to the telephone. A Miss Green, First Assistant of the Seward Park Branch of this Library was on the wire." She had been told that a number of books belonging to the Library were being offered for sale from a neighborhood pushcart. In response to this, Mr. Gaillard took a train to the City and met with some of the Seward Park Branch staff. There he found that books belonging to the Rivington Street branch were also for sale, and one had been bought by a library messenger. The report goes on to relate detective work done by Gaillard to the point where he turned the case over to the Police Department. He had worked until 8:30 PM investigating.

Later we understood why a man with Gaillard's title was doing the kind of work

he was. As he had a special interest in library security, he was asked to help on these cases. He was eventually asked by the Director of The New York Public Library to be the first official Special Investigator that was employed. His many roles and a number of interesting details about Gaillard can be found in a fascinating 2013 book by Travis McDade called *Thieves of Book Row*, although that book focuses on his successor, G. William Bergquist and his efforts to investigate the sale of rare library books.

One never knows where a search may lead!



**Allen Cohen and Marty Yanofsky  
at Seward Park Branch, June 25, 2015**

## **RECENT EVENTS**

### **RETIREES VISIT TO STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM**

There was a pleasant surprise in store for us, the thirteen NYPLRA members and two spouses, who met to tour the Staten Island Museum on Monday, March 30, 2015. The lovely and astute lady who was our guide recognized longtime West New Brighton Branch Librarian Margaret Ma Lin as having been, as she put it, “my librarian.” Fond recollections of bringing her children to the library followed, as well as a general declaration of love for libraries and appreciation for librarians.

We enjoyed viewing the surprisingly diverse exhibits in the compact building, from the innovative art of the late Staten Island artist Betty Bressi to the charmingly old-fashioned natural history exhibits that reflect the early days of this venerable institution, to the small but fascinating Staten Island Ferry exhibit.



**(l to r) Polly Bookhout and Caroline  
Oyama at Staten Island Museum**



Next we adjourned to the auditorium for an illustrated talk by Renee Bushelle, Manager of Visitor Services, and Robert Bunkin, Curator of Art, revealing the plans for the museum's expansion into Building A, one of the main buildings at Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Gardens. Extensive renovations are being done to preserve the landmark Greek Revival building while adding modern climate control and even striving for "green" designation. (Although some of us were skeptical about whether the planned opening date could be met, happily it did occur in mid-September with a gala weekend of events.)

After our tour and talk, most of us relaxed over good food and conversation at nearby Beso restaurant.

### **VOELKER ORTH MUSEUM, BIRD SANCTUARY AND VICTORIAN GARDEN**

By Beth Wladis

There is no way to predict how an excursion will turn out. Events often meet or exceed our expectations—but not always. A case in point is the NYPLRA's outing to the Voelker Orth Museum on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. For those who attended, it was mixed at best. Extreme subway delays, brutally hot weather, and a somewhat disappointing venue conspired to create a day that had its problems, especially for the stalwart members who, after a lengthy delay on a stalled train, made the trek on foot from the distant subway station. Lunch, too, was an uneven experience.

The Voelker Orth house, and especially its backyard, reminded me of the upstate town where I grew up. It has many still-visible traces of the old days: Civil War- and Victorian-era homes, and—in a few places at curbside—formal stone mounting blocks and posts where carriages would tie up in

front of homes on once-gracious residential avenues. Voelker Orth's grape arbor—which provided us with a refreshing and VERY welcome homemade fruit punch—brought back memories of the grapevines that hung over the back of my grandparents' now-demolished house in Elmira's equivalent of the Lower East Side. I never got a taste of my grandfather's fabled wine...

The Voelker Orth Museum is carving out its place in the ever-growing number of historic house museums. It styles itself as an exemplar of a middle-class home, typical of its once semi-rural location in Flushing, Queens, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The house is of interest primarily because it is the last of its kind in its neighborhood and is largely intact, having been owned by the same family for over 100 years.



**Yolanda Bonitch by the grape arbor**

Interest in middle-class life and decorative arts, especially of the 1950s and '60s, has grown in recent years. Consider the fascination with the TV series *Mad Men* and the care taken by its designers to be accurate in creating the characters' offices and homes. In northern Westchester County (NY), recovering alcoholics make "pilgrimages" to Stepping Stones, the otherwise ordinary home of Alcoholics

Anonymous co-founder Bill W. And in Corona, Queens, music fans visit the Louis Armstrong House Museum and delight in his fifties-era turquoise kitchen. The “1950s House,” a hugely popular temporary exhibit at the Shelburne Museum (VT) was extended to meet overwhelming demand. And in Sweden, a typical fifties apartment has been preserved as a museum and is open for free one day a week.

For comparison’s sake, the Tenement Museum focuses on everyday immigrant life in the “seemingly ordinary building” at 97 Orchard Street. For additional house museums in New York City, you might want to check out the Historic House Trust.

We visited Voelker Orth hoping for something that it didn’t quite turn out to be. But even though it wasn’t distinguished by its architecture and garden (though nice), its former residents (though upstanding), or a historically significant event, it is a very good example of a dedicated staff doing a valid job of helping today’s adults and children learn how people used to live and what it was like to be ordinary—in a good way—in days gone by.

**See last page for websites of interest.**

## **BIBLIOKNITTERS**

By Irene Martin



In the Spring of 2014, a group of retirees began meeting in Mary K. Conwell’s art studio on a monthly basis. We’re all knitters and crocheters who enjoy the camaraderie of working on individual projects while chatting on any and all topics - even books! While we are at different skill levels, we all benefit from the suggestions made by the others. Occasionally, very little knitting is accomplished as we help each other untangle or wind yarn - but no matter, we enjoy each other’s company.

Some of us have contributed to charity by producing scarves, cat beds, toys, hats, etc. Recently, tiny cardigans were knit for premature babies, and most of a meeting was spent sewing on buttons. One of the more intriguing ideas is to make “Knitted Knockers” for breast cancer survivors.

Right now, every seat in the studio is occupied. However, there is a way to virtually participate if you knit or crochet (or weave). The group name is “Biblioknitters” and we can be found at [www.ravelry.com](http://www.ravelry.com). Jennine Porta has designed a logo; I’m acting as the group’s Administrator. Our group page is still under construction, but we urge all of you knitters out there to join the group and share photos of your projects!



**Some of the garments produced by the Biblioknitters**



**front row (l to r): Fran Rabinowitz, Amy Spaulding, Jennine Porta**  
**back row (l to r): Jane Kunstler, Irene Martin, Glenderlyn Johnson, Ma'lis Wendt, Alexandra Lutz, Gennie Perez**

## RETIREE NEWS

### WILLIAM LEO COAKLEY

Have been greatly enjoying the memoirs, *Episodes and Vignettes, an Autobiography* (2 vols.), of our Union's founding President and former Economics Division staff member David Beasley. It is the story of his energetic life and journeys, beautifully enlivened with the writings throughout of his late first wife Viola. There is much of NYPL interest in the second part (and pictures). He even did research here before joining the staff.

In my own writing, I have published a lot lately and read in public, too. On April 1 (appropriately), I read at Barnes and Noble Union Square after I had won several awards from the Yeats Society. But I should mention primarily that my poem, "One More Flower for David Poole," is in the Spring issue of the good magazine, with the amusingly '60s name, *Hanging Loose*. David worked in Preparation Division and spent much of his lunch and free time gardening in Bryant Park, then an eyesore. I

remember that before his early death in the mid-'80s, he was greatly helped by our wonderful Staff Nurse Sigrid Swick. To the Library's shame, the position was abolished shortly thereafter.

### ONE MORE FLOWER FOR DAVID POOLE

This one lives forever, like Charlie's  
 Madcap perennials even rats  
 Grown fat on Library leavings  
 Can't eat all the heads off.  
 This one needs no water or tears,  
 Like glass orchids under glass,  
 Silk violets made in Paris,  
 Sewn in cold rooms in the old stories.  
 This one fools you, late, like poppies,  
 Each spring, with its juice of sleep and  
 dreams.  
 Thick through cracks in our stone childhood,  
 This one, yellow with rags and rage,  
 Lifts you away like the last fever  
 Burning to dust in dead men's eyes,  
 But its roots bore deep to find you:  
 This one, David, never dies.

William Leo Coakley  
 Reprinted from *Hanging Loose*  
 no. 105 (2015)



### MARY K. CONWELL

In 1964, I spent the spring semester of my junior college year in Valencia, Spain. This is a photo of me with two of the other American students I met there. Yes, I'm the one in the middle.



Over time, the three of us lost touch. But fifty years later, in 2014, we found each other again, had one reunion in Florida (photo below), and another in upstate New York. Then in May of this year, we went back to Spain together, visiting old haunts in Valencia, getting reacquainted with the daughter of one of the host families, and enjoying the sites and beauty of Spain's Costa Blanca. This has been a wonderful friendship renewed!



### RICHARD GERCKEN (former NYPL staff member now living in Massillon, Ohio)

Longtime friend and former colleague Leonard Viggiano referred me to you. I am trying to locate someone who was custodian at the Tompkins Square branch in the mid-to-late sixties: Lincoln Penaranda. Do you have any information on him? Thank you. Editor's note: Please contact Becky Koppelman if you have any information about Mr. Penaranda.

### DORIS GREEN

I'm especially enjoying Yoga, Zumba, and quilting. It's great to meet adults in the neighborhood with their children, who remember me from the Library and are thankful for their library experiences.

### BECKY KOPPELMAN



I would like to tell you what has happened personally within my family. My husband George and I have become proud

grandparents! We are so very happy and pleased.

Our son Sam's wife Melissa gave birth to a daughter on October 1, 2015. Her name is Louie Stella—Lou Lou for short. She is perfect: a sweet and darling baby.

At birth she weighed 6 lbs. 9 oz. and was 19 inches long. Her eyes are very dark and she has a lot of dark smooth hair with a slight curl at the ends. Right now she eats, sleeps, and dirties her diapers, but she's adorable. Of course we love her!

We know many people have lovely grandchildren; many of you do. But when it happens to you, it is such an exhilarating feeling. She is our first grandchild, and our lives have changed forever because of her. Soon she will begin to recognize us. We will laugh with her and spoil her. We will read stories to her, sing to her, and play games with her. No one ever knows what awaits your family, but having a grandchild... It can't get better than that. Mazel Tov.

### KATHY ROWAN



Alan Pally took this photo of Kathy (on the right) with Beryl Eber and Bob and Adele Bellinger.

Kathy Rowan met with many friends while visiting New York City in September to be interviewed for the oral history project.

### ERMA BONNIE PHELPS

Dearest Former Co-workers and Friends,

It's been such a long time since I sat down to take pen in hand to say hello, but truly you are always in my prayers. Compared to most of you, my life is quite mundane. I still stay busy with children and church. I can't do as much as I would like anymore. I now fully understand the expression: "Once a man, twice a child." And, I might add, I deeply now understand Father Castle's warning, "Old Age is not for sissies." Although he may have been quoting someone else.

I rarely travel, and, when I do, it's never away from American shores. The farthest I have ever been is Chicago and California. I can sense Mr. Markey's joy over his home in Hawaii.

I so enjoy reminiscing about my years at NYPL—my "Ups and Downs," ALL! God never promised us a bed of roses, and, even if He did, even roses have thorns. I feel so grateful for this opportunity to reflect on just everything right now—God's patience, and humanity's faults and foibles.

Now, for a funny moment. One evening on duty at the circulation desk, a beautiful woman came to check out her selections. She stood for a few moments sniffing the air. Then, looking at me seriously, she asked "What fragrance are you wearing?" For a minute I couldn't remember—then suddenly did and replied, "Oh! Somolic Rose." "Oh," she whispered mournfully, "it reminds me so much of my husband. I'm divorcing him." Me, feeling what I thought



was her sadness, whispered just as quietly  
“I’m so sorry.” She, perking up, quipped,  
“Don’t be; I’ll find somebody else.” I  
chuckled all the way home.

Please forgive the untidiness of this letter.  
Being an octogenarian ain’t easy. I promise  
the next time I write, God willing, I won’t  
be so lengthy. Wishing all love, peace, joy,  
Bonnie Phelps.

P.S. My really bright moment is that a book  
of poetry I have written is finally ready.

### PAUL WASHINGTON

Retiree Paul Washington and his wife have  
produced a video that won a Telly award,  
“the premier **award** honoring outstanding  
local, regional, and cable TV commercials  
and programs, as well as the finest video and  
film productions.” The video is called  
“Horatio Salutes Women” and can be found  
on YouTube. Just type in its name, and  
enjoy!

### ARLINE WILSON

I’m taking creative writing classes, and I  
belong to a memoir writing group. We meet  
each week and share and criticize our  
memoirs. Last year, I joined the “Reading  
Buddies” program, tutoring a second grader  
in reading. I belong to a Scrabble group, and  
we meet each week to play “almost  
tournament-level” games. Gym membership  
rounds out the week. Oh, and I mustn’t  
forget, I’m a member of the ladies who  
lunch; this just means that I’m willing to eat  
out at a moment’s notice. Hey, this  
retirement thing is really working out!

### PHILIP WOLCOFF

When I retired, the library gave me a  
beautiful Tiffany clock with the engraving,  
“40 Years Service With Appreciation The  
New York Public Library.”

I was very grateful. I started working for the  
Library March 1952 and, except for my  
service in the U.S. Army from January 1955  
to December 1956, I worked there until  
March 1994.

I was very happy, reaching the position of  
Supervising Branch Librarian, and proudest  
of my last position. I worked as Supervising  
Branch Librarian of the Parkchester Branch,  
one of the busiest in the Bronx. While I was  
there, the Branch increased its circulation  
enough to have a Principal Librarian as  
librarian-in-charge. Wendy Caldiero, a  
Principal Librarian, became our new Branch  
Librarian, and I stayed on as Supervising  
Assistant Branch Librarian. I feel that the  
staff I supervised and I should be proud to  
have worked in a branch that was busy  
enough to have this happen.

### 2015 NEW MEMBERS

Jay Barksdale  
Dudley Brown Carlson  
Joanne Conte  
Fred Giordano  
Jane Greenlaw  
Susan Price Karpuk  
Sandra C. Pugh  
Paul F. Washington

## IN MEMORY OF NYPL RETIREES, COLLEAGUES, AND FRIENDS

We are all saddened when one of our own passes away. But are you wondering why some of our obituaries are so brief? It's because we've been unable to find information on a retiree's life or work history. We search as best we can, but our resources are limited. However, if you knew the person who has passed away, please share your information. Write or email your memories to us, and we will pass them on. In that way, we all can remember our friends and colleagues. Obituaries were previously sent via email and U.S. Mail for the following:

Lucidia Gratacos Aruz  
Timothy F. Beard  
Marian Benjamin  
Cynthia Clark  
Miriam Hood  
Giovanni Marmosa  
Sylvia Von Oberleithner  
Marie Zwanziger

**THIS NEWSLETTER** is published annually by the New York Public Library Retirees Association.

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**NYPLRA Facebook Page:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-New-York-Public-Library-Retirees-Association/123598427801504>

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## IN THE MEDIA

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To keep up with library news in our city, visit our website, [www.nyplra.org](http://www.nyplra.org).

On the **Library Advocacy** page, you can find links to other active organizations, such as Citizens Defending Libraries and others.

The **In The Media** page will direct you to articles in newspapers, blogs, and magazines.

Will your pension be taxed if you move to another state? A helpful chart was published in the September 2015 issue of *Public Employee Press*. If you don't have a paper copy, you can view this chart on the DC37 website, [www.dc37.net/](http://www.dc37.net/)

## **IN THE EVENT OF A RETIREE'S DEATH**

In the event of a retiree's death, the following are to be contacted by next of kin:

NYPL Human Resources Service Center (212) 621-0500, prompt 4, for general NYPL questions.

DC37 (212) 815-1234, for union benefits information

New York State Retirement System (866) 805-0990, toll-free, for pension questions and to inform NYSRS of the person's death date. A death certificate will be required as proof of death.

The New York Public Library Retirees Association would also like to be contacted so that we may inform the deceased's former colleagues. This may be done by emailing or calling President Becky Koppelman at [blekopp@gmail.com](mailto:blekopp@gmail.com) or (212) 984-6199.

## **WEB ADDRESSES FOR SITES MENTIONED IN THE VOELKER-ORTH ARTICLE:**

*Mad Men*: <<http://www.movingimage.us/exhibitions/2015/03/14/detail/matthew-weiners-mad-men/>>

Stepping Stones: <<http://www.steppingstones.org/>>.

Louis Armstrong House Museum:  
<<https://www.louisarmstronghouse.org/visiting/overview.htm>>.

The "1950s House": <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1950s\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1950s_House)>.

Sweden's typical fifties apartment: <<http://www.routesnorth.com/gothenburg/gothenburg-see-and-do/museums-and-galleries-in-gothenburg/gothenburgs-tiny-apartment-museum/>>.

Tenement Museum: <<http://www.tenement.org/about.html>>.

Historic House Trust: <<http://historichousetrust.org/>>.